

UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

Faculty of Humanities
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Master's Thesis

COLLECTIVE MEMORY EMBODIED IN POETRY AS POISON.

THE MNEMONIC ROLE OF ROMANTIC POETS
DISCUSSED ON THE BASIS OF ADAM MICKIEWICZ'
KONRAD WALLENROD AND *FOREFATHERS* (PART III)

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Turku, March 2015

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This thesis constitutes an interdisciplinary approach to the Polish Romanticism combining literature studies with memory studies, nationalism research and psychoanalysis. This phenomenon-based study attempts to answer the question, how the Polish national poet Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855) – or more exactly the implied authors in his works – perceived the role of poetry in mnemonic terms and how it changes in course of time. Consequently, ‘memory in literature’ (Astrin Erll and Ansgar Nünning) is discussed here.

Two pieces of writing by Mickiewicz – *Konrad Wallenrod* [1828] and the third part of *Forefathers* [1832], where a bard respectively a poetic genius appears – are seen as meta-texts defining goals of poets in time of the political non-existence of a state. Poetry is supposed to keep memory of the glorious past alive, kindle the love for the motherland, support the collective identity of a group and initiate a liberation movement. Poets function as memory guards, leaders of the nation and prophets. Thus, literature is a medium of collective memory – it stores crucial contents, transmits them and acts as a cue.

Nevertheless, shifting the focus from the community towards well-being of individuals, which is consistent with the postmodern thinking, the impact that poetry has on members of a given memory culture (Jan Assmann) can be described in ‘vampiric’ terms (Maria Janion). Poetry embodying collective memory may be compared to ‘poison’, ‘infecting’ people with a nationalistic way of thinking to their disadvantage as far as their personal lives are concerned.

Key words: Adam Mickiewicz, collective memory, Romantic poetry, vampirism, role of the poet, nation-building, memory in literature, literature as a medium of memory, poison, Polish Lithuanian-Commonwealth, *Konrad Wallenrod*, *Forefathers*

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Working on the thesis was a long-lasting and stressful process. Thus, last but not least, I would like to thank my family and friends for their support and understanding. At the same time, I have to apologise to them for being recently almost entirely focused on Mickiewicz and his 'poisonous' poetry in preference to everything else (cleaning and making dishes in the first instance). I hope that I have not turned into a vampire under the impact of Romantic poetry and now my social life will flourish. Nevertheless, Mom, a dishwasher is a great idea!

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1. Introduction

*Was unsterblich im Gesang soll leben,
Muss im Leben untergehen¹*

Friedrich Schiller

The term ‘memory’ appears several times in Adam Mickiewicz’ oeuvre – usually in positive connotations – referring both to individual and so-called collective memory², that is, to contents, important for a distinct community and transmitted throughout generations. This thesis constitutes an interdisciplinary approach to Polish Romanticism combining literature studies with memory studies and nationalism research. It attempts to answer the question, how Mickiewicz – or more precisely the implied author in Mickiewicz’ works – perceived the role of poetry in mnemonic terms.

Firstly, two pieces of writing, written by the poet before his emigration to Paris in 1832, are analysed here and perceived as meta-texts defining goals of (Romantic) poetry in time of political non-existence of a state. The thesis investigates the function of broadly understood literature (including oral poetry etc.) as a medium of collective memory.

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is often believed to survive in memory of people³ although it was erased for 123 years from the map of Europe at the end of the 18th century. Thus, the importance of (national)⁴ literature is not to be omitted in this

¹Schiller Friedrich: “Die Götter Griechenlandes”, *Sämtliche Werke. Berliner Ausgabe*, Berlin 2005, Vol.1: *Gedichte*, p. 190. Mickiewicz ends with this quotation the foreword to his poem *Konrad Wallenrod*,

² Comp.: “Pamięć”, *Słownik języka Adama Mickiewicza*, ed. Kornad Górski and Stefan Hrabec, Warszawa 1969, Vol. 6 (P), p. 16–19; Trybuś Krzysztof: *Pamięć romantyzmu. Studia nie tylko z przeszłości*, Poznań 2013, p. 69.

³ Miłosz Czesław: *The History of Polish Literature*, London 1983, p. 195.

⁴ The terms ‘national’ and ‘nation’ are used in this thesis in a slightly ahistorical manner. They do not implicate that a text belonged to the national canon already in the 19th century, rather that they were written with a goal to cultivate tradition and strived at keeping memory of a glorious past alive. Such texts contributed in this way to consolidation of nations in a modern understanding, but originally they could refer to tradition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as a whole. Nevertheless, Polish culture dominated in the conglomerate state and thus the adjective ‘Polish’ refers often also to Lithuania.

context, since poets supported actively the maintenance of (collective) memory consciously writing their works with patriotic or even nationalistic aims⁵.

Secondly, the relation between issues significant for the existence of a 'nation', stored in its collective memory on the one hand, and personal dreams of its members on the other will be elaborated. It will be argued that poetry – and, thus, collective memory embodied in poetry – can have a negative impact on individuals, as it is to be concluded from Mickiewicz' texts. The thesis investigates, how (Romantic) poets, supporting the formation of (national) identities, shape the worldview of members of those groups.

Last but not least, having in mind that "The Polish Romanticism used numerous methods in order to stave the motherland seeing the artist as a medium, a bard [*wieszcz*] and a prophet"⁶, the thesis seeks to sketch the development of the mnemonic role of poetry and poets, assumed to be Mickiewicz' understanding. *Konrad Wallenrod* [1828] is perceived as the peak of the idea: 'poet as a memory guard' and as a turning point. With the third part of *Forefathers*⁷ (known also as *Forefathers' Eve*; *Dziady*; 1832), Mickiewicz' focus changes slowly – he starts to promote a new type of character⁸.

⁵ It was not only a Polish tendency. Comp.: Grabes Herbert, Sichert Margit: "Literaturgeschichte, Kanon und nationale Identität", *Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft. Theoretische Grundlegung und Anwendungsperspektiven*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, Berlin–New York 2005, p. 306.

⁶ Janion Maria: "Artysta romantyczny wobec narodowego sacrum", *Romantyzm i jego media. Prace wybrane*, Kraków: 2001, Vol. IV, p. 219, [Author's translation].

⁷ The poetic drama cycle *Forefather* consists of four loosely linked parts, published between 1822–1860. Part I has never been finished, while there are also some poems and comments included in the cycle. About the idea of this work, see: Trojanowiczowa Zofia: "*Dziady* jako 'niedokończony poemat'", *Romantyzm od poetyki do polityki. Interpretacje i materiały*, Kraków 2010, p. 229–241.

⁸ Comp.: "Abandoning with Conrad the type of hero-individualist – rebellious recluse-poet, who has appeared in his [Mickiewicz'] works for many years and summed-up ideally in this character, Mickiewicz preserved for a long time his trust in human personalities honoured with gifts of spiritual power. But he would not look for them in a poet, rather in a carer of a living word – in prophets and messiahs" (Witkowska Alina: "Adam Mickiewicz", *Romantyzm*, ed. Alina Witkowska and Ryszard Przybylski, Warszawa 2007, p. 288–289, [Author's translation]) and "The character of priest Piotr soars over crazy Conrad. He is a kind of complement, a higher level of Conrad's heroism – a spirit of love, but cleansed from pride [...] Conrad is dead, Piotr is born" (Tretiak Józef: "Kto jest Mickiewicz", *Kto jest Mickiewicz*, Kraków 1924, p. 156, [Author's translation]).

Although I deal first of all with literary texts and intend to stay as far as possible within the boundaries of the fictional world, it seems to be reasonable to describe briefly the situation in Central and Eastern Europe at the beginning of the 19th century. The historical background motivates my interpretation to a large degree and what is even more important: “Romantic literature, contrary to common belief, delivered from the spirit of the time and did not exist independently of it”⁹. Hence, before presenting the aim of the thesis, the moment of the loss of independence and its meaning for Polish (national) memory culture will be outlined. Moreover, basing on theories, I will discuss the link between collective memory, nation building and formation of memory culture.

1.1. After the Third Partition... – Historical Background¹⁰

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth ceased to exist politically in 1795 as a result of the third partition, conducted by the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire¹¹. Hopes for the state revival appeared, when Napoleon – proceeding eastwards – formed a French satellite, the Duchy of Warsaw (1807). That is why, after Napoleon’s defeat, Polish expectations could not be ignored entirely at the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815). However, they could not be met there either. Finally, an autonomous Kingdom of Poland (Congress Poland), bound in a personal union with Russia, was created. Despite an improvement of the situation, Romantic ideas, nostalgia for military glory, and Russian policy in the 1820s together with the unbalanced

⁹ Zentuan Konstanty: “Mickiewicz’ *Konrad Wallenrod*: An Attempt at Reappraisal”, *Comparative Literature Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1969), p. 160.

¹⁰ The historical background is based on publications: Zamoyski Adam: *The Polish Way. A Thousand-year History of the Poles and their Culture*, New York 2000, p. 259–300 and Gieysztor Aleksander, Kieniewicz Stefan, Rostworowski Emanuel, Wereszycki Henryk, *History of Poland*, Warszawa 1968; p. 399–462 and 473–486.

¹¹ The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a dualistic state of Poland and Lithuania established at the Union of Lublin in 1569 (earlier – since the 14th century – a personal union between the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania), was partitioned in three stages (1772, 1793 and 1795) by the neighbouring great powers. Two sovereign states – Poland and Lithuania separately – have been established first after the First World War in 1918 as the outcome of the treaty of Versailles (1918).

behaviour of the Grand Duke Constantine spoiled the Polish attitude towards the Tsar – particularly among younger generations. It led to an unsuccessful revolt in 1830/1831. The November Uprising cost much: the Polish constitution, army and parliament were abolished and several freedoms restricted, which additionally aggravated the conflict between nation-minded citizens and Russian authorities.

Paradoxically, the loss of independence in the late 18th century was followed by the emergence of a wider concept of ‘Polishness’ and a heyday of Polish (national) culture¹², not limited to nobles¹³, but taking inspiration also from country people. The German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder influenced such an attitude.

On the one hand, Herder perceived nations – not states – as historical units¹⁴ claiming that also politically dependent ethnic groups had their own histories and a right to decide upon their destiny. On the other hand, he argued that all people belonged to one race, but each nation had its own spirit (*Volksgeist*), shaped by numerous components, typical for the environment, where a given group used to live. This ‘national soul’ was expressed by language, first of all in folk songs, as peasants were less affected by foreign cultures than fine people. Herder’s thought tempted for ‘nations’ living within

¹² Miłosz Czesław: *The History of Polish Literature...* p. 200; Lanoux Andrea: “Canonizing the *Wieszcz*: The Subjective Turn in Polish Literature Biography in the 1860s”, *Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol 45, No. 4 (2001), p. 624. The birth of Polish national culture refers to cultural texts believed not to follow Western patterns so closely any more. They pretended to be original and described the exclusively Polish circumstances. On the whole, first literary texts written in Polish language appeared already in the Middle Age. About beginnings of literature written in Polish: Michałowska Teresa: “Twórczość w języku polskim”, *Średniowiecze*, Warszawa 2008, p. 265–318.

¹³ Between the 15th and the 18th century, nobles in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth perceived themselves as a community descending from the ancient people Sarmatians and believed that only they constituted the nation. More about their ideology called ‘sarmatism’: Nowicka-Jeżowa Alina: *Barok polski między Europą i Sarmacją. Profile i zarysy całości*, Warszawa 2009–2011, p. 211–287.

¹⁴ Nisbet Hugh Barr: “Herder. The Nation in History”, *National History and Identity. Approaches to the Writing of National History in the North-East Baltic Region Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Michael Branch, *Studia Fennica Ethnologica* 6, Helsinki 1999, p. 78–96.

conglomerate states like e.g. the Poles (and equally Lithuanians) did and gained a great popularity in Eastern and Central Europe¹⁵.

1.2. Collective Memory and Being a Nation

Ernest Renan claims in his paper *What is a Nation?* [1882] that being a nation is a matter of remembering and forgetting, since “the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things”¹⁶. Striving after a political unity, nations are often confronted with a necessity of renouncing resentments and desire to revenge for sufferings experienced in the past. However, cultivating memory seems to be even more important in this context. Race, language, religion, geography, material interests, and external military danger may support – according to Renan – nation building, but are not decisive.

A nation is admittedly a soul (which resembles Herder’s theory), or – in other words – a spiritual principle consisting of two things: “one lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of heritage that one has received in an undivided form”¹⁷. The past is recalled constantly with the aim to persuade individuals that they share something with other members of their ‘nation’, that is with people, who they have never met before and who they will probably never get to know (at least most of them). However, they feel affiliated by the fact that they

¹⁵ Polish intellectuals familiarised themselves with Herder’s philosophy and developed his positive image of Slavs included in *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Humanity* [1784–1791; *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*]. Kazimierz Brodziński e.g. inspired by Herder popularised a myth of a special role and distinctive features of Slavic people in his programme writing: *O klasycyzmie i romantyzmie, tudzież o duchu poezji polskiej* [1818; *About the Classic and Romantic, That is about the Spirit of Polish Poetry*].

¹⁶ Renan Ernest: *What is a Nation?*, online available: http://web.archive.org/web/20110827065548/http://www.cooper.edu/humanities/core/hss3/e_renan.html [access: 22.05.2014].

¹⁷ Ibid.

have suffered, enjoyed and hoped together. The unifying impact of suffering is thereby extraordinary high: “Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort”¹⁸.

Renan’s idea can of course be applied to the Poles (and Lithuanians) as well. The state partitions, after which only sad memory of lost greatness was left, had features of such a bloody event. Causing sufferings, experienced more or less directly by broad masses of people, this deed of violence committed against the Poles (and the Lithuanians) consolidated people and encouraged them to fight for independence.

Also Jan Assmann points at a break between the past and the present state of affairs in his famous book *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* [1992; *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*]:

The rupture between yesterday and today, in which the choice to obliterate or preserve must be considered, is experienced in its most basic and, in a sense, primal form in death. Life only assumes the form of the past on which a memory culture can be built through its end, through its irremediable discontinuity. One might even call it the primal scene of memory culture¹⁹.

Consequently, the partitions of the state resemble the Assmannian ‘basic experience’ leading – among other thing – to the formation of the Polish memory culture.

Likewise, such an approach recalls Friedrich Schiller’s sentence, quoted at the very beginning of the introduction: “And Fancy, crushed by life’s stern pressure, / Lives but in Poetry sublime”²⁰. Mickiewicz cites it in the preface to *Konrad Wallenrod*, where he

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Assmann Jan: *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, Cambridge 2011, p. 19.

²⁰ Schiller Friedrich: “The Gods of Greece”, *The Poems of Schiller*, New York 1901, p. 76. Schiller’s poem is about the world as it was once was (beautiful and innocent), when the Gods ruled of it.

pretends to summarise the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This brings up the question about tools needed to keep the past alive. According to Assmann ‘tradition’ does not belong to such measures, since “Dead people and memories of dead people cannot be handed down. Remembrance is a matter of emotional ties, cultural shaping, and a conscious reference to the past that overcomes the rupture between life and death”²¹. Thus, Assmann, who seems not to reflect ‘invented’ aspects of tradition²², speaks about cultural memory. Independently from, how one calls it, it is not to deny that some kind of activity is required to protect particular issues from forgetting.

1.3. Why Adam Mickiewicz?

Romantic poetry belonged to the main motifs in the early 19th century and appeared in numerous literary texts, and hence the role of Romantic poets has often been investigated²³. Therefore, it was also necessary to narrow the field of my research. Moreover, I wanted to look at it from a new, interdisciplinary perspective.

Examining solely Mickiewicz’ works is not an accidental solution. For a long time he has been seen as the greatest Polish poet²⁴ and his influence of Polish culture is not to be downplayed: “Adam Mickiewicz quickly came to occupy a central position in the Polish literary canon as a national figure, being recognized by critics as a national poet

²¹ Assmann Jan: *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization...* p. 20.

²² Hobsbawm Eric: “Introduction: Inventing Traditions”, *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger, Cambridge 1992, p. 1–14. Hobsbawm claims that ‘national traditions’ are a product of the 19th century’s national movements, which created them in favour of consolidating people around some traditions and rites believed to be cultivated for ages.

²³ Comp. e.g.: Siwiec Magdalena: *Romantyczne koncepcje poezji. Poeta i Musa – relacja w stanie kryzysu*, Kraków 2012, p. 11–67.

²⁴ Mickiewicz – as the only poet – is seen as a Polish memory place, comp.: Olschowsky Heinrich “Johann Wolfgang von Goethe und Adam Mickiewicz. Poetische Gesetzgeber des kulturellen Kanons”, *Deutsch-Polnische Erinnerungsorte* ed. Robert Traba and Hans Henning Hahn, Vol. 3: *Parallelen*, Paderborn 2012, p. 217–244. How a cult of Mickiewicz emerged, see Lanoux Andrea: “Canonizing the *Wieszcz*”... p. 624–640.

soon after the publication of his first two Volumes of poetry in his early twenties”²⁵. He contributed to the development of Romanticism in Poland (the publication of his first collection *Poetry* [*Poezja*] in 1822 marks out a symbolic beginning of this period).

Mickiewicz fostered Romantic (national) thinking not only theoretically, but also putting it into praxis. He died 1855 in Istanbul creating the Polish Legion, designed to fight against Russia in the Crimean War²⁶. Moreover, „Just Mickiewicz, how it seems, created the model of the bard as a spiritual guide of the nation. In large part literature substituted political institutions – non-existed or imposed by conquerors”²⁷, which is particularly important in regard to the question discussed in this thesis.

Talking about Mickiewicz as a Polish national bard may arouse controversy, since his national affiliation is not so obvious – the Poles and the Lithuanians as well as the Belorussians may claim that he was their fellow-countryman. The poet, born 1798, grown up in a polonaised family on the territory belonging earlier to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (the present-day Belarus) and referred very often to Lithuanian culture and folklore (usually mixed with the Belorussian one²⁸).

Especially his early poems and ballades like *The Lilies* [1820; *Lilje*] or *The Nixie* [1822; *Świtezianka*] reuse old legends and recall local traditions. His most famous writings, the Polish national epos, *Master Thaddeus. The Last Foray in Lithuania* [1834; *Pan Tadeusz, czyli ostatni zajazd na Litwie*] begins even with the phrase “Litva! my

²⁵ Lanou Andrea: “Canonizing the *Wieszcz*... p. 624. What is more, there was a much bigger interest in poetry at that time than it is today. Many people were involved in reading and discussing poems.

²⁶ About the Polish Legion, see e.g. Piechota Marek, Lyszczyzna Jacek: “Legion Polski”, *Słownik Mickiewiczowski*, Katowice 2000, p. 177–178. More about the life of Mickiewicz, see: Jastrun Mieczysław: *Mickiewicz*, Warszawa 1967 and Górski Konrad: *Adam Mickiewicz*, Warszawa 1989.

²⁷ Masłowski Michał: „Kanon kultury w dziele Adama Mickiewicza”, *Problem tożsamości. Szkice mickiewiczowskie i (post)romantyczne*. Lublin 2006, p. 271–272, [Author’s translation].

²⁸ Miłosz Czesław: *The History of Polish Literature*... p. 208.

country!”²⁹. Nevertheless, Mickiewicz’ oeuvre and his other activities allow to state that he understood himself as a Pole, while Lithuania was for him only a region, an integral part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth³⁰.

Therefore, in this study, the term ‘Lithuania’ is used in a similar manner as Mickiewicz did it, which helps me to omit contradictions between the Polish national movement and texts telling about Lithuania. Nonetheless, remarks on the role of poetry are universal and to some extent may be applied to each national movement. The non-existence of the Polish state made them just sharper and more prominent compared with other countries: “in the Polish context the lack of an independent state in this period [Romanticism] only strengthened the connection between literature and national identity”³¹.

1.4. The Choice of the Case Studies

As mentioned before, I decided to deal exclusively with the works by Mickiewicz. However, such a contraction turned up to be not enough, since memory as a (background) subject appears in several writings of this author³². I resigned examining single ballads or sonnets, where the motif of poetry as (collective) memory is signalised, but not so obviously connected with the social role of Romantic literature and poets, to the benefit of longer texts, which better illustrates these ideas.

²⁹ Mickiewicz Adam: *Master Thaddeus. The Last Foray in Lithuania*, London 1885, p. 1. Polish text: *Litwo! Ojczyzno moja!* (Mickiewicz Adam: *Pan Tadeusz czyli ostatni zjazd na Litwie*, p. 6). As far as possible I use the English translations. Since they are old, in order to avoid mistakes, I quote the original text in footnotes.

³⁰ About Mickiewicz’ complicated (national) identity and understanding of ‘nation’ in the Romanticism, see: Wesołowska E. Anna: “Narody i rozumienie ich spraw w twórczości Adama Mickiewicza”, *Adam Mickiewicz. Wielkość-tradycja-pamięć. 1798–1855–2005*, Płock 2006, p. 81–94. More about Mickiewicz and Lithuania see: Venclova Tomas: “Native Realm Revisited: Mickiewicz’ Lithuania and Mickiewicz in Lithuania”, *Lituanus – Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 53, No. 3, Fall 2007, online available http://www.lituanus.org/2007/07_3_03%20Venclova.html [access 04.05.2014].

³¹ Lanoux Andrea: “Canonizing the *Wieszcz*”... p. 624.

³² Comp.: “Pamięć”, *Słownik języka Adama Mickiewicza*... p. 16–19.

Furthermore, I tried to find such texts, which combined national thinking with the problem of poetry in their subjects. Consequently, two works have been selected. They belonged to the early period of Mickiewicz' literary production³³ and to his most famous pieces of writing. The narrative poem *Konrad Wallenrod* and the third part of the drama cycle *Forefathers* are the texts in question.

Below I will explain why they have been included in the analysis. Short summaries of their plots will be placed in the introductory parts to the chapters concerning with a given text. Those reviews will be rather phenomenon-based so I will present motifs, relevant to this thesis, leaving out all other interpretation clues, by no means less interesting. Also selective overviews over previous research on *Konrad Wallenrod* and *Forefathers* (Part III) are to be found at the beginning of the respective chapters.

In general, the focus is laid on those two works, since a bard respectively a poet (a Romantic genius) are crucial characters in them. Thus, it is possible to perceive those works as meta-texts, defining the role of poetry and its social duties in a specific context, that is, after the loss of statehood. Contrary to some other Romantic pieces of writing, where an ethnocentric and mentally weak poet, resembling Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Werther-alike-character³⁴, plays the main part, here the object of unhappy love is not a woman, but the motherland.

Moreover, these both texts bear a political meaning and refer unambiguously to the liberation movement. *Forefathers* (Part III) expresses it directly, showing problems of

³³ Early writings of Mickiewicz are classified as 'poetry of word' [*peazja słowa*]. Later, his poetry developed into 'poetry of act' [*poezja czynu*], which should be more closely tied to political activity. Comp.: Witkowska Alina: "Adam Mickiewicz"... p. 294–295.

³⁴ The character from Goethe's novel became a model, inspiring several authors, who created figures resembling Werther's behaviour. One example of such a character is to be found in Mickiewicz' *Forefather* (Part IV), where Gustav, an unhappy lover, visits his ex-teacher, the priest, and blames him for destroying his life. The priest namely gave him book, which significantly influenced Gustav's perception of women and love.

young patriots (mainly from Vilnius, but also from Warsaw) in the first half of the 19th century. *Konrad Wallenrod* uses, in turn, the Aesopian language, depicting (seemingly) the wars between the Teutonic Order and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 14th century. This can be, however, read in context of political circumstances in the 19th century's Russian Empire – as a text justifying duplicity in the name of patriotism³⁵.

Furthermore, they tend to be tied to each other in the research, because *Forefathers* (Part III) almost followed the publication of *Konrad Wallenrod*. Halina Krukowska e.g. argues that both works have the motif of vengeance in common³⁶, while according to Alina Witkowska, “In Mickiewicz’ oeuvre *Konrad Wallenrod* announces the creation of an individual having extraordinary sources of power, an unlimited will to self-sacrifice and an equally unbridled pride – Conrad from *Forefathers* (Part III)”³⁷. Interestingly, both characters have the same name, which determines their common interpretations³⁸.

1.5. Aims, Definitions and Limitations

This interdisciplinary study investigates on the basis of Mickiewicz’ early works his concept of memory embodied in (national) poetry. I perceive his narrative poem and drama as a kind of poetic manifests stating meta-textually, which social tasks wait for Romantic poets in a situation, when their fatherland politically does not exist.

³⁵Such an interpretation has been quite widespread becoming a canonic one. Comp.: Janion Maria: “Tragizm Konrada Wallenroda”, *Tragizm, historia, prywatność*, Kraków: Universitas 2000, p. 78–126.

³⁶Krukowska Halina: *Noc romantyczna. Mickiewicz, Malczewski, Goszczyński. Interpretacje*, Gdańsk 2011 p. 180.

³⁷Witkowska Alina: “Adam Mickiewicz”... p. 264.

³⁸Comp. e.g.: Szymanis Eligiusz: “Warum ist die Dresdener ‘Ahenfeier’ des Dramas dritter Teil?”, *Adam Mickiewicz und die Deutschen – Eine Tagung im Deutschen Literaturarchiv Marbach am Neckar*, ed. Ewa Mazur-Kęłowska and Ulrich Ott, Wiesbaden 2000, p. 94–95. The link between those two texts is even more visible in Polish, since the spelling of the names is exactly the same – ‘Konrad’.

On the level of fiction, I look at the impact, which collective memory – a component of collative identity – has on the identity of single characters seen as illustrative members of a community. This is made from an individual's point of view, that is, from the perspective of Konrad respectively Conrad. Collective memory embodied in poetry is argued to have its dark sides, as Mickiewicz's works may be understood.

Consequently, it seems that collective memory might be seen in his texts as a curse. Borrowing the comparison from *Konrad Wallenrod*, it has potential to act as poison infecting young people with patriotic values in the process of socialisation. Afterwards, they shall follow those ideas and sacrifice themselves for common goals. That is why, it can be talked in the fictional world created by Mickiewicz about some kind of violence exerted by tutors-poets on their pupils-listeners (or readers), who are supposed to love the motherland above everything else and voluntarily resign fulfilling their own dreams.

To start with defining crucial terms partly mentioned already above and understood intuitively. There is, of course, no space here to go into details, so I will not present the historical development of those terms. Rather such definitions will be formulated, which are applicable in my interpretation.

First of all 'collective memory' belongs to such terms. It refers to common knowledge that unifies people both spatially and temporally. Moreover, formed with respect to the past in a socio-cultural framework³⁹ through interactions, communication, media and institutions, it is an integral part of personal memory. In the process of socialisation, some issues – seen as essential for the group identity – are instilled in individuals. In an

³⁹ Halbwachs Maurice: *Das kollektive Gedächtnis*, Frankfurt/Main 1991. More about the development of this term: Erll Astrid: *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen. Eine Einführung*, Weimar 2005 and Wawrzyniak Joanna: "Pamięć zbiorowa", *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, ed. Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska and Robert Traba, Warszawa 2014, p. 346–351.

ideal case, all members of a (national) community shall hold of the same net of references, which allows them to interpret the world in a similar manner and decode information, meaningless to foreigners, who have been equipped in other cultural codes, characteristic of their cultures⁴⁰. At the same time collective memory can, however, legitimise existing power relations and cause conflicts, since it “is characterised by sharp distinction made between those who belong and those who do not”⁴¹.

According to the American sociologist and historian Jeffrey K. Olick there are actually two basic concepts to be distinguished at the fundamental level: collected and collective memory. The former one describes individualistic principles of memories (an aggregated set of personal experience, remembered in a way shaped by cultural and social frameworks of references), while the latter one contains institutionalised definitions, symbols, practices and records provided by groups, partly independent of the single members of those groups⁴². Mostly – as not stressed otherwise – I use the broader meaning of collective memory. However, the category ‘collected memory’ will be applied by elaborating on the situation of the poet in *Forefathers* (Part III).

Transmission of collective memory is not possible without media of memory, not only spreading it, but also taking part in the creating of this memory. On the whole, as Astrid Erll claims, the media have three functions of: (1) storage – some contents are preserved – stress on their temporal durability; (2) circulation – communication between members

⁴⁰ Comp.: Barthes Roland: *Mythologies*, New York: 1991. Firstly, in the process of denotation, the basic meaning of a cultural text is decoded. It is a description level and most people would agree on, what they see. By contrast, the second level of signification – connotation – is a meta-level (myth). Meaning is decoded with broader cultural concepts, that is, by use of cultural codes. It is not more obvious, since it is closely linked to the culture, and the same thing can be interpreted in various ways.

⁴¹ Assmann Jan: “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity” ... p. 130. Assmann refers actually to cultural memory, a institutionalised variation of the long term memory. Functions of collective memory mentioned by Wawrzyniak would also result rather from cultural memory.

⁴² Olick Jeffrey K.: *The Politics of Regret. On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility*, New York and London 2007, p. 23–30.

of a community (also living in the past) in larger spaces, where the face-to-face communication is not possible; and (3) cue – memories are recalled and interpreted in a certain way by a community⁴³. Rarely, those functions appear separately⁴⁴.

Usually, media of memory are associated with script, but initially memory was passed orally⁴⁵. Therefore, both speaking and writing belong to basic media of memory. In oral cultures poetry fulfils the role of ‘encyclopaedia’ containing ‘whole’ knowledge gained by a given culture in course of time⁴⁶. Nonetheless, similarly, collective memory seems to be transmitted in oppressed communities, where an official circulation of information is under control and questioning it may be punished⁴⁷.

Another important term used is ‘vampiric literature’. The adjective ‘vampiric’ does not refer here to novels about demonic beings, but to the role of Romantic poetry. The Polish literature scholar Maria Janion stated that some Romantic myths influence the Polish national identity significantly and belong to Polish ‘collective memory’ determining the worldview of the Poles. On the basis of her observations, she suggested a metaphoric sense of ‘vampirism’, which dated back to the early Romanticism:

The Romantic authors – fanatic enthusiasts of the ‘book world’ – worked out a very special way of reading (also of their own texts). It can be called ‘hypnotic’, or ‘vampiric’. They wanted their works to become alive, to live

⁴³ Erll Astrid: “Literatur als Medium des kollektiven Gedächtnisses”, *Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft. Theoretische Grundlegung und Anwendungsperspektiven*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, Berlin–New York 2005 p. 249 and 254–256. Comp. also: Kałużny Jerzy: “Kategoria pamięci zbiorowej w badaniach literaturoznawczych”, *Kultura Współczesna* 3(53) 2007, p. 98–99; Saryusz-Wolska Magdalena: “Literatura i pamięć. Uwagi wstępne”, *Pamięć zbiorowa i kulturowa. Współczesna perspektywa niemiecka*, ed. Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska, Kraków 2009, p. 181–184; Trybuś Krzysztof: *Pamięć romantyzmu* ... p. 21.

⁴⁴ Erll Astrid: “Literatur als Medium”... p. 254.

⁴⁵ Assmann Jan: *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*... p. 3–4.

⁴⁶ Havelock Eric A.: “Mimesis”, *Preface to Plato*, Cambridge 1963, p. 27 and 30–31.

⁴⁷ Comp.: “In totalitarian states, there is also no storing memory, but for very different reasons. In such a state [...] every scrap that is left over from the past has to be changed or eliminated because an authentic piece of evidence has the power to crash the official version of the past on which the rulers base their power” (Assmann Aleida: “Canon and Archive”, *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, Berlin and New York 2008, p. 105).

on the blood and body of their readers, to put themselves literally into the life and practice of people, to bite, to instil patriotic frenzy and to enthuse with it. To vampirise⁴⁸.

Reusing this idea, the thesis concentrates on the role of poetry in the 19th century, instead of investigating the impact that Romanticism is supposed still to have on modern Polish society⁴⁹.

Due to the motif-based concept of this study and a relatively narrow focus on collective memory and (national) poetry, I avoid analysing the whole texts and try to stay within the fictional world without compering my conclusions to Mickiewicz' actions, personal convictions and non-literary writings. However, perceiving the data as meta-texts, I do not take up the question of fictionality itself. The role of the poet / poetry is seen as a model to be applied in reality by poets in the first half on the 19th century. On the whole, it is focused on poetry presented by Mickiewicz in his early pieces of writing – on poetry spoken out by the old Lithuanian bard Halban in *Konrad Wallenrod* or by the young, inspired poet Conrad in *Forefathers* (Part III) – rather than on Mickiewicz' attitude. They are, nonetheless, partly equalised, since examining the phenomenon of Romantic poetry, I argue that it is Mickiewicz' understanding of it.

1.6. Disposition

Concerning the formal structure, the thesis has three larger units: Introduction, Analysis (consisting of two chapters) and Conclusion.

The first part – Introduction – sketches a historical background depicting the political situation, in which Mickiewicz composed. This combines his writings with the 19th

⁴⁸ Janion Maria: "Polacy i ich wampiry", *Zło i fantyzmaty*, Kraków 2001, p. 44–45, [Author's translation].

⁴⁹ Comp.: Janion Maria: "Rozstać się z Polską?", *Niesamowita słowiańszczyzna*, Kraków 2006, p. 301–337. Janion discusses in Romantic terms e.g. speeches of Polish politicians, confronting them with tradition of messianism and martyrdom.

century's settings. Also some general remarks on nation and memory are included here. Next, Introduction presents the Polish national bard himself as well as the object of the study: the epic poem and the drama. Their plot – together with previous research – is, nonetheless, summarised in the introductory part to respective chapters. Following the explanation of the aim of the study, crucial terms are defined, limits of this research pointed out, and the general structure described. Afterwards, methods and theories applied in the analysis will be introduced.

The analytical part, the main one in the thesis, has two chapters dealing respectively with *Konrad Wallenrod* and *Forefathers* (Part III). In order to elaborate on the role of poetry / the poet, I start with analysing proper fragments of the epic poem, treated as a case study. It presents, how oral poetry performed by the bard in the poem shapes the inner and outer life of his listener(s), and elaborates on the way, in which poetry – understood as collective memory – forms personalities and initiates acts of members of a given community. Social tasks of Halban are described as well as his influence on actions of the main character Wallenrod is characterised. The impact of this 'enforced' poisoning memories functions as a link to the other text.

Forefathers (Part III) helps me to find out, how poetry works and how the poet himself (the main character called Conrad) perceived his own duties towards society. Furthermore, I examine the ontological status of the poet and the phenomena embodied in his character discussing the relation between the poet and poetry more deeply in terms of its 'vampiric' features. Furthermore, the 'social' functions of the poet will be defined. For the purpose of this thesis I focus mainly on Conrad's songs.

In Conclusion – in the third and last part – the whole analysis will be summed up and its results highlighted. Finally, I will try to propose some further research.

1.7. Method and Theory

On the whole, my interdisciplinary approach is quite unique within research on Romanticism, since it combines literature studies with memory studies referring as well to some theories of culture studies, nationalism studies and psychoanalysis. Although the combination of memory and literature research is nothing new, as postwar literature and art, dealing first of all with the Holocaust, are nowadays often investigated from this perspective⁵⁰, Polish Romanticism is rarely approached in this way.

Nevertheless theories of memory studies can be applied to various texts from different periods, because collective memory as a phenomenon is not a product of the 20th century⁵¹. Thus, it can be applied to the Poles in the 19th century, that is, during the time of the so-called national awakening in Europe and the non-existence of a Polish state.

Focusing on the primary literature in my close, phenomenological-hermeneutical reading of Mickiewicz' works, I combine relevant aspects of different theories instead of choosing one theoretical framework and following one discipline from the beginning to the end. In this way, complexity of the social, mnemonic role of poetry shall be better illustrated. Hence, the list of authors includes various names, not necessary literary

⁵⁰ It is consistent with the development of memory studies itself. A 'memory turn' took place in humanities in the 1980–1990s, when the generation affected directly by the Second World War started to die out before the trauma of the Holocaust has been worked out. About the beginnings of memory studies, see e.g. Saryusz-Wolska Magdalena, Traba Robert: "Wprowadzenie", *Modi Memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, Warszawa 2014, p. 13–28, especially p. 18 and Erll Astrid: *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen...*

⁵¹ Assmann gives some examples of ancient memory cultures: Egypt, Israel and Greece. Assmann Jan: *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization...* p. 147–276.

scholars. What is more, many writers, whose theoretical texts I refer to, have worked interdisciplinary and their outstanding works influenced other fields of research as well.

The basic theoretical foundation of this thesis is built on the combination of memory and literature studies. Those two fields interfere with each other. A systematisation of their interrelations has been proposed in *Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft. Theoretische Grundlegung und Anwendungsperspektiven*. It is possible to talk about (1) memory of literature, (2) memory in literature and (3) literature as a medium of memory⁵². While the first possibility refers mainly to intertextuality of a literary text, the second one characterises, how memory is presented metaphorically, symbolically etc. in such texts. The last one – literature as a medium of memory – refers to the fact that some content important for the community are collected in literature, transmitted by it and they may initiate actions in this way. This relation was elaborated especially by Erll, who divided functions of media in storing, circulating and acting as a cue⁵³.

The two latter kinds of link between literature and memory are particularly crucial in this study, since I attempt to examine collective memory is metaphorically presented as poetry in Mickiewicz' works and to investigate the phenomenon of Romantic poetry as a medium of memory. I point out, which elements were believed to be necessary to be passed throughout the generations and how poetry stored memory of the motherland, circulated the narrative about the past and worked as a cue remaining about duties towards the community.

⁵² Erll Astrid, Nünning Ansgar: "Literaturwissenschaftliche Konzepte von Gedächtnis: Ein einführender Überblick", *Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft. Theoretische Grundlegung und Anwendungsperspektiven*, Berlin–New York 2005, p. 1–9.

⁵³ Erll Astrid: "Literatur als Medium"... p. 254–256. Comp. also p. 14 in this thesis.

As it can be deduced from previous subchapters, I borrow terminology among others scholars from Assmann and Olick as far as memory studies are concerned. The former one writes for instance about collective memory replacing an individual I by a social I⁵⁴ and the ‘canon’, which “defines the proportions of what is beautiful, great, or important, and it does so by pointing to works that embody and exemplify the relevant values”⁵⁵. The canon is an active form of cultural memory, circulating among members of a community. Its content is “designed to be repeatedly reread, appreciated, staged, performed, and commented”⁵⁶. Consequently, it consolidates the collective identity.

Olick’s terms – besides the distinction of ‘collected memory’ and ‘collective memory’, mentioned already above – are ‘mythic logic’ or ‘rational logic’ as two operating modes of the mediated past⁵⁷. The former one is “often associated with the power of the past over the present”⁵⁸ and tied to taboos and duties, while the later – instrumental one – is “often associated with the power of the present over the past”⁵⁹ and connected with prohibitions and requirements. Both modes have their proscriptive (what must not be done) and prescriptive dimensions (what must be done)⁶⁰.

In terms of this thesis the former mode: mythic logic is particularly interesting, since it describes a kind of ‘violence’ that is ‘committed’ by the past events and aims at the present situation. Through taboos and obligations it is linked to a broader sense of morality. Norms dictated by this kind of logic have an absolute nature and, thus, cannot

⁵⁴ Assmann Jan: “Erinnern, um dazugehören. Kulturelles Gedächtnis, Zugehörigkeitsstruktur und normative Vergangenheit”, *Generation und Gedächtnis. Erinnerungen und kollektive Identitäten*, ed. Kristin Platt and Mihran Dabag, Opladen 1995, p. 52.

⁵⁵ Assmann Jan: *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*... p. 102.

⁵⁶ Assmann Aleida: “Canon and Archive”... p. 97–99.

⁵⁷ Olick Jeffrey K.: *The Politics of Regret* ... p. 38–42.

⁵⁸ Ibid.: p. 38.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.: p. 42.

be challenged, since “these issue are not decided by rational argument”⁶¹. This idea will be useful by examining the impact of collective memory on lives of individuals.

Violent relationship between collective memory and individuals will be additionally explained in reference to the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and the Austrian psychiatrist Sigmund Freud. The former one saw memory as something characteristic of human, who are not able to stop thinking about the past although it causes pain and sufferings, depriving them of happiness and driving into remorse⁶². Moreover, Nietzsche described the patriotic love for the motherland together with all norms and duties resulting from the membership in a community as a conscious wish of a community to prevent some content from forgetting⁶³.

Freud, though, understood collective memory as something hereditary, recorded in unconsciousness and constrained. In his opinion it was a result of the pressure put on an individual’s soul by dramatic experiences⁶⁴. Additionally, I apply Freudian division of the human psychic apparatus into: the id (reigned by instincts and drives), the super-ego (a ideal, critical and moralising instance) and the ego (a realistic part, which tries to satisfy both the id respecting the norms given by the super-ego, thus, some desires of the id can be suppressed). While the id is linked to bodily needs and desires, the super-ego defines the socially accepted manners. Duties toward the past and ancestors will be seen in my interpretation as a part of an individual’s super-ego⁶⁵.

⁶¹ Ibid.: p. 41.

⁶² Nietzsche Friedrich: “The Use and Abuse of History”, *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Oscar Levy, Edinburgh and London 1909, Vol. II *Thoughts Out of Season*, online available: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/38226/38226-h/38226-h.htm> [access: 2.6.2014].

⁶³ Nietzsche Friedrich: *On the Genealogy of Morals*, online available: <http://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/Nietzsche/genealogy2.htm> [access: 2.6.2014].

⁶⁴ Freud Sigmund: *Abriss der Psychoanalyse. Einführende Darstellung*, Frankfurt am Main 2009, p. 101.

⁶⁵ Freud Sigmund: “Das Ich und das Es”, *Das Ich und das Es. Metapsychologische Schriften*, Frankfurt am Main 2011, p. 251–295.

By contrast, transmitting collective memory will be related to ‘vampiric’ understanding of Romantic literature, elaborated by Janion⁶⁶. I apply her theory especially to *Forefathers* (Part III), since this work of Mickiewicz seems to shift the focus from the addressee of the poetic content and the potential impact of poetry on individuals towards the addresser – the poet himself – and the relationship poetry-poet. The development of the idea of social, mnemonic tasks of the poet will be sketched.

1.8. Previous Research

Of course, the chosen primary literature – due to its significance for Polish culture – is a common object of different studies. Like in case of all national poets previous research on Mickiewicz is very extended and cannot be shortly presented in its whole. However, there are hardly any works focusing on collective memory in Mickiewicz’ oeuvre. In the best case mnemonic issues are mentioned on the margin.

Therefore – and because I investigate two different texts – I have decided to present the relevant secondary literature in the introductory parts to chapters addressing *Konrad Wallenrod* and *Forefathers* (Part III) respectively, where also the main plots of those works and selected phenomena are described.

However, I would like to mention one book separately – Krzysztof Trybuś’ *Pamięć romantyzmu. Studia nie tylko z przeszłości* [2013, *Memory of Romanticism. Studies not only from the past*]. This publication as a whole is dedicated to memory studies and the way of depicting memory in Romanticism. Although Trybuś uses similar theoretical frameworks as me, he has a different approach to the topic. His work does not focus on poetry and the mnemonic role of the poet. Mickiewicz’ references to general Slavic

⁶⁶ Janion Maria: “Polacy i ich wampiry”... p. 31–51.

memory are only one of problems investigated by Trybuś, who states among other things that “Mickiewicz – in his understating of memory – is close to the modern distinction in communicative memory (which according to Assmann is a memory of the everyday) and cultural memory (a sacred memory)”⁶⁷. Although Assmann’s distinction of memory is not so visible in my thesis, it is present in its background.

⁶⁷ Trybuś Krzysztof: *Pamięć romantyzmu* ... p. 130. About those two kinds of memory see e.g: Assmann Jan: “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity”, *New German Critique*, No. 65, *Cultural History/Cultural Studies* (Spring–Summer, 1995), p. 125–133.

2. *Konrad Wallenrod* – Poetry vs. the Listener

2.1. The Main Plot and the Origin of the Poem

Summarising the main plot, *Konrad Wallenrod* tells about the life of a Lithuanian, kidnapped in the childhood by the Teutonic Knights. Walter Alf, who is the child in question, grows up in the Teutonic State, brought up in patriotic spirit by an old Lithuanian bard Halban⁶⁸. Albeit Alf comes back to Lithuania at the earliest opportunity, seeing the impotence of his countrymen and their miserable prospects of success in the fight against the Germans⁶⁹, he decides to leave his motherland again (this time on his own request) in order to find a way to destroy the Teutonic Order from inside. After years spent on the exile, Alf – known now as Konrad Wallenrod – arrives in Marienburg, becomes the Grand Master and clumsily leads the knights to the ignominious defeat. Having executed his plan, he commits suicide.

Inspired by great European writers⁷⁰, Mickiewicz started writing his historical narrative poem in 1824. It took him several years to complete it, but finally – after being declined

⁶⁸Walter Alf was attached also to the German community. The Grand Master Winrych took care of him. Comp.: “The Master Winrych in his palace / Reared me, himself did hold me to the font, / Loved and caressed me as his very son”. (Mickiewicz Adam: *Konrad Wallenrod*, London: 1882, p. 47). Polish text: *Winrych, mistrz krzyżacki, chował mię w swoim palacy / On sam do chrztu mię trzymał, kochał i pieścił jak syna* (Mickiewicz Adam: *Konrad Wallenrod*, Hanower 1946, p. 49). All quotations from *Konrad Wallenrod* came from these two editions.

⁶⁹ Although there were representatives of other ‘nations’ among the Teutonic Knights, they are usually identified solely with the Germans. Using those terms synonymously, Mickiewicz contributed to the negative stereotype of the Germans in the Polish culture. Comp.: Zybura Marek: “...krzyżackiego gadu nie ugłaszczę nikt. O narodzinach negatywnego obrazu Niemca w romantyzmie polskim”, *Sąsiedztwo zobowiązuje. Polskie i niemieckie (pre)teksty literacko-kulturowe*, Poznań 2007, p. 96–101.

⁷⁰ Mickiewicz translated George Gordon Byron’s work *The Giaour* (1813) into Polish while writing *Konrad Wallenrod* and was inspired first of all the British writers, see: Ujejski Józef: “O Adamie Mickiewiczu. byronizm i skottyizm w *Konradzie Wallenrodzie*”, *Romantycy*, Warszawa 1963, p. 23–54. About his German inspirations, see: Janion Maria: “Tragizm Konrada Wallenroda”... p. 92–93.

by the censorship in Vilnius and Warsaw – it was published in St. Petersburg in 1828⁷¹. Mickiewicz was forced to use the Aesopian language hiding the meaning of the text under the cloak of history⁷². Nonetheless, the content of *Konrad Wallenrod* was tied to the then political situation. It was understood as an incentive to struggle for independence in the context of the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

2.2. Interpretations, Previous Research and Outline of the Thesis

Already in the 19th century the link between *Konrad Wallenrod* and the November Uprising took a mythical dimension. The outbreak of the revolt was seen as a literal realisation of the poet's postulates associated with this narrative poem⁷³, which Mickiewicz himself called "a political booklet"⁷⁴. Hence, most interpretations – following the 19th century's legacy – have focused on the betrayal and the double moral of oppressed people⁷⁵.

Further discussions have concerned the moral conflict respectively the tragic situation of Wallenrod, who has to choose between the chivalric code and his duties towards the

⁷¹ After being imprisoned for the involvement in the secret student organisation Philomaths acting at the Imperial University of Vilnius (the centre of Polish academic life then), Mickiewicz was sent 1824 up-country. He explored Crimea, Odessa, Moscow and St. Petersburg. More about it: Jastrun Mieczysław: *Mickiewicz...* p. 109–214. Imprisonment inspired *Forefathers* (Part III). Also *Konrad Wallenrod* is often linked to Mickiewicz' biography. See: Chwin Stefan: "Wyobraźnia romantyczna a spisek", *Literatura a zdrada*, Kraków 1993, p. 9–16.

⁷² The story pretends to be based on historical fact. The main hero has e.g. the name of a historical Grand Master of the Teutonic Order – Konrad von Wallenrode – who ruled in Marienburg 1391–1393. Nevertheless, events are freely interpreted and transformed by the imagination of Mickiewicz. In general, presenting the medieval history of Lithuania was not the main goal of the poet. Chwin Stefan: "Wyobraźnia romantyczna a spisek"... p. 14.

⁷³ Comp.: Janion Maria: "Tragizm Konrada Wallenroda"... p. 79–80. It was said that "The Word became flesh, and Wallenrod became Belvedere" (Janion Maria "Artysta romantyczny"... p. 213, [Author's translation]), which clearly refers to the incarnation of Christ [John 1, 14]. Consequently, the attack on the Belvedere palace in Warsaw, starting the insurrection, was perceived as a kind of good news resulted from the narrative poem.

⁷⁴ Janion, Maria: "Tragizm Konrada Wallenroda"... p. 78, [Author's translation].

⁷⁵ Ibid.: p. 80.

motherland: the latter ones are presented as a matter of an utmost value, worth the biggest efforts, sullyng one's honour included⁷⁶.

On the whole, the main character is in the limelight in the text, but it has to be stressed that the character of the old Lithuanian bard also has a very important function. Józef Treściak e.g. claims that actions and sacrifices of Wallenrod are "fruits of poetry that arouses a will to act"⁷⁷ and that Halban is "an embodiment of national poetry"⁷⁸, while Józef Ujejski argues that "Wallenrod's wallenrodism is born from Halban's songs"⁷⁹. Walter Alf-Konrad Wallenrod is just not to imagine without the bard, who accompanies him and influences his deeds and decisions nearly lifelong.

Without going into details by analysing this narrative poem, scholarship agrees that the character of the bard is almost impersonal⁸⁰ and symbolises "the merciless necessity"⁸¹ or "hatred"⁸², while his songs express the pure love for the motherland⁸³. Stefan Chwin claims that Mickiewicz "dehumanises" Halban "changing him into 'medium' of Lithuanian songs"⁸⁴. Thus, "meeting the bard, Wallenrod [...] does not commune with Lithuania, but with a man, who embodies in himself the spiritual essence of Lithuania – a sublime Lituanianness entrenched in words of songs and legends"⁸⁵.

⁷⁶ Maria Janion gives an overview of the main interpretation lines in her text: "Tragizm Konrada Wallenroda"... p. 78–126, and suggests paying more attention to tragedy as a main aesthetic and ethic category in this poem.

⁷⁷ Treściak Józef: "Idea Wallenroda", *Pamiętnik Towarzystwa Literackiego im. A. Mickiewicza*, I. Lwów: 1887, p. 21, [Author's translation].

⁷⁸ Ibid.: 11–12, [Author's translation].

⁷⁹ Ujejski Józef: "Wstęp", *Konrad Wallenrod*, by Adam Mickiewicz, Hanover 1946, p. IX, [Author's translation]. The term 'wallenrodism' refers to the attitude of Wallenrod: in order to liberate the motherland, he decides to act morally doubtfully and sacrifices his honour as well as himself.

⁸⁰ Ibid.: p. XIII.

⁸¹ Janion Maria: "Tragizm Konrada Wallenroda"... p. 117, [Author's translation].

⁸² Ibid.: p. 119, [Author's translation].

⁸³ Ujejski Józef: "Wstęp"... p. XIV.

⁸⁴ Chwin Stefan: "Porwany za młodu", *Literatura a zdrada*, Kraków 1993, p. 51, [Author's translation].

⁸⁵ Ibid. [Author's translation].

I will follow the idea that Halban symbolises Lithuanian tradition and culture (in other words collective memory) and combine it with the understanding of this character proposed by Witkowska – perceiving him as “an embodiment of memory”⁸⁶ – as well as with Ujejski’s and Juliusz Kleiner’s suggestions that he is a symbol of poetry⁸⁷.

Firstly, I will not only describe social tasks that may be attributed to Halban and his songs, but also specify their influence on Wallenrod. Furthermore, the link between collective memory and poetry will be examined. Analysing the impact of the collective identity on the individual one from Wallenrod’s perspective, I will argue that collective memory negatively affect the life of individuals. The reference songs-poison, articulated by the Grand Master in *Konrad Wallenrod*, will be underlined and compared with theories of memory, which stress violent and forced aspects of collectiveness.

2.3. The Mnemonic Role of the Poet and Poetry

Although motifs of the poet / poetry are characteristic of Romantic literature and appear in several romantic pieces of writing, not only composed by Mickiewicz⁸⁸, as far as *Konrad Wallenrod* is concerned, these interpretational clues are rarely examined on their own sake. On the whole, the motif recurs three times in the text in slightly different contexts: (1) firstly, they are recalled as memories from the childhood of the main character, when Halban instilled with his patriotic songs the love for the motherland in the orphan boy; (2) later, they are performed simultaneously in the time

⁸⁶ Witkowska Alina: “Adam Mickiewicz”... p. 262, [Author’s translation].

⁸⁷ Ujejski writes: “Wallenrod is only a great man, while Halban is a symbol – a symbol of an exaggerated in a dream, but real historical element, which poetry, really inspired by God and flickering in the collective soul, constitutes in the life of the nation” (Ujejski Józef: “Wstęp”... p. XIV, [Author’s translation]).

⁸⁸ Siwiec e.g. elaborates on Słowacki’s concept of poetry, see: Siwiec Magdalena: *Romantyczne koncepcje poezji*....

of the plot, during the feast in the castle, when an ‘unknown’ bard⁸⁹ associated with the disguised Halban reminds the Grand Master of his promise made several years earlier; and finally (3) after the death of the main character, Halban promises to set off on his way around Lithuania, where he will praise deeds of Wallenrod with his songs (the songs are again not performed, only announced in the plot).

In the beginning it has to be stated that Mickiewicz writing about the Middle Ages refers by the way to oral societies. Songs, written down in *Konrad Wallenrod* or mentioned as playing a part in Wallenrod’s life, were – according to the text – not read, but performed. Hence, they constitute oral literature. Thus, despite the fact that this narrative poem was written in the 19th century and composed by a literal poet, some aspects of oral culture seem to be relevant by examining the role of the poet and poetry. Especially, that similar features of literature tend to be applied by emerging ‘slave-nations’, which – subordinated to a foreign culture – do not have such possibilities to spread (national) contents, affecting their countrymen as they would have in their own sovereign state. In the face of different limitations, they were forced to create ‘unofficial’ contra-culture⁹⁰ and transmit their collective memory orally.

Analysing functions of oral literature in *Konrad Wallenrod*, one can divide them into two groups. (1) Songs listened to by Wallenrod in his childhood and those sung composed after his death, when he himself is about to become the subject of poetry,

⁸⁹ The singer is called ‘*wajdelota*’, which is a term used for describing Lithuanian bards, chaplains and quacks. In the text of *Konrad Wallenrod* it is not exactly stated, whether this bard is disguised Halban or not, but he seems to know the past of the Grand Master and be aware of his promise. Thus, he will be treated as one and the same person although the way of perceiving those characters as two separate characters does not affect my conclusion regarding the role of the poet and his influence of listeners.

⁹⁰ An alternative version of the past understood as ‘contra-culture’ refers to Micheal Foucault’s categories of ‘contra-memory’ and ‘contra-history’. It is assumed that the subjected group does not identify themselves with an official discourse and resists it with forming its own narrative, which cannot be freely distributed. More about ‘contra-memory’ see: Bojarska Katarzyna, Solarska Maria: “Przeciw pamięć”, *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, ed. Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska and Robrt Traba, Warszawa 2014, p. 396–403.

belong to the first category. The poet and poetry fulfil a clearly didactic and informative function contributing the process of socialisation of (young) members of a (national) community. They support also the identity-building of members of a (national) group and commemorate (national) heroes.

By contrast, (2) the aim of poetry performed later, during the feast, differs slightly. Those songs serve as reminders, reprimands and warnings as well as call on to fight, which resembles Tyrtean poetry. Interestingly, Wallenrod himself responds with a song called “Ballad Alpujara”, telling seemingly about the Moors where fighting in Spain. The Grand Master almost discloses his secret: his real identity and goals. Almost, because his singing is understandable only to those, who know him well and are able to connect single facts from his life and catch allusions in his song⁹¹.

2.3.1. Didactic Songs: Bringing-up a Young Generation

Looking at the former type of the songs, their task is to promote a specific – in this case – patriotic attitude toward the world among the young generations. A traditional pattern of education, typical for oral societies, where young people listen to the elderly, is repeated⁹². Alf does not question knowledge passed on by Halban, guided by the ‘mythic logic’. He takes the bard’s advice and sooner or later fulfils his expectations. The bard, not his pupil, is the motor of development. Moreover, after the death of

⁹¹ It is not discussed here, as Wallenrod is not a poet in my understanding. His ballad is only a poetic response to the reprimand given him by the bard. This song is worth to mention, because of the Aesopian language used in it – statements with double meaning seem to characterise oppressed nations. More about its meaning see e.g.: Chwin Stefan: “Bunt indywidualistyczny. Powołanie do moralnej wielkości”, *Literatura a zdrada*, Kraków 1993, p. 61. Another interpretation is, nonetheless, possible. Kenneth F. Lewalski argues that Alf himself is a poet, who has to choose between Romantic poetry (embodied among other by his wife and wine) and patriotic poetry (whose embodiment is Halban). Comp.: Lewalski, Kenneth F. “Mickiewicz’ Konrad Wallenrod: An Allegory of the Conflict between Politics and Art”, *American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (October 1960), p. 423–441.

⁹² Comp.: “This is old age, which sustains memory” (Trybuś Krzysztof: *Pamięć romantyzmu ...* p. 77, [Author’s translation]).

Wallenrod, Halban is going to sing his songs further prompting other young people to follow in the Grand Master's footsteps.

Although their lyrics are not included in Mickiewicz's work, one may guess their content. Thanks to Halban Wallenrod learns history and language of his country, that is, things, which – according to the bard – each member of a (national) community should know⁹³. In this way, the old songs unite people like the biblical Ark of the Convent:

*O native song! between the elder day,
Ark of the Covenant, and younger times*⁹⁴.

They serve also as a bridge between the present and the past, teaching listeners the basic codes of Lithuanian culture⁹⁵ and saving the existence of the marginalised community in this manner. Nevertheless, no song is an objective narrative, but a compendium composed by the bard: "He [Walter Alf] gets to know a one-sided vision of the happy past of the nation, of the happy future and the vision of tormenting oppressed"⁹⁶. In other words, in the situation of the lack of independence, poetry popularising patriotic feelings may be perceived as a preventive measure against the loss of (national) identity⁹⁷ and as a representation of collective (national) memory saving this identity.

⁹³ Chwin claims that the system of Lithuanians sites was not included in Alf's education (Chwin Stefan: "Porwany za młodu"... p. 53) and Wallenrod attempted to import Western norms to Lithuanian society. I leave it open, since it is not to be proved in my opinion. The Western culture was of course better developed and could be attractive for Lithuanians as well as help them to defeat the Teutonic Order.

⁹⁴ Mickiewicz Adam: *Konrad Wallenrod*... p. 41. Polish text: *O wieści gminna! ty arko przymierza / między dawnymi a młodszymi laty* (p. 43).

⁹⁵ With 'cultural code' I refer again to Barthes's concept of representation working at two cultural levels. Comp.: Hall Stuart: "The Work of Representation", *Representation. Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, London 1997, p. 39–41 and Footnote 40 in this thesis.

⁹⁶ Chwin Stefan: "Porwany za młodu"... p. 52, [Author's translation].

⁹⁷ A notice, made by Chwin, is interesting in this context. He claims that language and songs rouse only Alf's longing soul, while his bound to Lithuania is based on the affection for nature. The language seems not to play so important part in the process of consolidation of the (national) identity accordingly, since Alf forgets many Lithuanian words and does not speak it fluently. Comp.: Chwin Stefan: "Porwany za młodu"... p. 51.

There is no doubt that Alf was the addressee of patriotic songs in the childhood, while the addresser was the bard, but it is uncertain who composed them. It is highly probable that Halban was not their primary author. They belong rather to old, oral literature, passed through generations and well known among the ethnic Lithuanians.

Such anonymous poetry, reproduced by several bards, who do not care about authorship or uniqueness, is characteristic of oral communities⁹⁸ as well as of a general approach to art and literature in the Middle Ages (where the historic settings of *Konrad Wallenrod* are placed), when art works were produced anonymously, inspired by and dedicated to God. In this case, however, the love for the motherland is this highest instance that has to be prized and honoured above all other – God included⁹⁹.

2.3.2. ‘Native Songs’: Protection of the ‘National Soul’

This elemental, spiritual equipment, functioning as a requirement to be a true member of the distinct (national) community is institutionalised in poetry, in the so-called ‘native songs’. The Polish term ‘*pieśń gminna*’ refers even more clearly than its English equivalent to the folk culture, since ‘*gmin*’ means according to *Słownik Języka Polskiego PWN* [*Polish Language Dictionary PWN*]: “the uneducated and poor people at large” and earlier it was used with respect to “the social stratum of poor peasants”¹⁰⁰. Such a reference to knowledge of the folk resembles the Herderian idea¹⁰¹, claiming that

⁹⁸ Similarly, the role of the author was minimised also in the folk culture. Comp.: Napiórkowski Marcin: “Folklor”, *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, ed. Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska and Robert Traba, Warszawa 2014, p. 135–136.

⁹⁹ Numerous religious terms are used in *Konrad Wallenrod*. Mickiewicz seems to combine religion with patriotism also in *Forefathers* (Part III) and in later pieces of writing. Comp.: Kleiner Juliusz: *Zarys dziejów literatury polskiej*, Wrocław 1972, p. 259; Chwin Stefan: “Porwany za młodu”... p. 52.

¹⁰⁰ “Gmin”, *Słownik Języka Polskiego PWN*, Vol. 2, Warszawa 2007, p. 31, [Author’s translation].

¹⁰¹ Treściak represents a similar opinion: “‘Native rumour’ is a folk song and poetry, which traditionally entwines with ivy the ruins and generally draws juices from native soil, the past of the motherland, in short from contents and the soul of the nation [...] This poetry, being the only image of the past known by the following generations, becomes a bound in this way” (Treściak Józef: “Idea *Wallenroda*”... p. 9, [Author’s translation]).

the national soul is to be found in the songs performed by simple people in their native languages. What is more, allusions to the folk culture and ‘native songs’ may often be found in Mickiewicz’ early writings¹⁰².

Hence the bard in *Konrad Wallenrod* is not a creator, not a Romantic genius, but a skilful and convincing craftsman¹⁰³, orientated on propagating certain objectives that should reach – in his opinion – possibly many people. He is an embodiment of old poetry, which materialises itself in his words and includes “a spiritual power, a power that is able to transform cooled hearts”¹⁰⁴. The fact that this kind of poetry is not a fruit of inspiration, but a part of a canon repeated by several Lithuanian bards explains why also the other Lithuanians gathered in the castle on the feast are able to understand to a degree the meaning of songs presented there. In some way, those ‘native songs’ may be seen as a standardised package or a storage of knowledge transmitted throughout the generations within one community, crucial for this group and its survival¹⁰⁵. In other words, the membership in a group obligates people to get known and later reproduce collective memory. The mnemonic concept of literature called ‘literature as medium of memory’, especially its forms as storage and circulation can be observed here.

Accordingly, it can be argued that as long as the singing sounds, the country, which disappeared in a political sense, lives in memory of the community. The nation is namely safeguarded by poetry (even not by the poet), as it is formulated in the poem in regard to the ‘native songs’, which are:

¹⁰² Comp.: Witkowska Alina: “Adam Mickiewicz”... p. 249.

¹⁰³ More about the duality of the Romantic concept of poetical inspiration, where the poet is a tool in power of *force majeure* on the one hand; on the other – an autonomous creator. See: Siwiec Magdalena: *Romantyczna koncepcja poezji*... p. 14.

¹⁰⁴ Chwin Stefan: “Bunt indywidualistyczny”... p. 58, [Author’s translation].

¹⁰⁵ Chwin presents similar understanding of ‘native songs’ – as “the last bastion, where tradition of an endangered nation is saved” (Ibid.: p. 58, [Author’s translation]).

*[...]as guardian placed,
Defending memories of a nation's word¹⁰⁶.*

Therefore, it seems also to be unessential who sings those songs – anyone can do it – since they must just be stored and circulated. Halban understands this and refuses to commit suicide with Wallenrod. According to Kleiner “it is a national poet, conscious of his mission [...] – a chaplain of the national soul, who protects its treasures from annihilation and has in himself the whole, previous tradition as well as the one, who prepares the future”¹⁰⁷. Poetry has namely to survive and be further performed in spite of everything. People may die, generations may change, but memory shall be cultivated. The bard confirms it telling Wallenrod, how his fame will spread around the world:

*And where I pass not, there my song shall fly.
The bard shall sing them unto knights in war,
And women sing them for their babes at home¹⁰⁸.*

The ‘native songs’ will commemorate Wallenrod. Thanks to them, his deeds are supposed never to be forgotten and his sacrifice will be acknowledged.

Moreover, spreading these songs among countrymen is so crucial, because no invader is able to stop the process of remembering and endanger the metaphysical existence of a state, as long as the nation-minded individuals themselves do not insult collective memory by forgetting the words of the song. In the long run, this would mean decay of the community¹⁰⁹, which would be an even bigger tragedy as the loss of statehood.

¹⁰⁶ Mickiewicz Adam: *Konrad Wallenrod*... p. 41. Polish text: *stoisz na straży / Narodowego pamiątek kościoła* (p. 43). The more accurate, literary translation of mine: *you guard the church of national memories*.

¹⁰⁷ Kleiner Juliusz: *Zarys dziejów literatury polskiej*... p. 214–215, [Author's translation].

¹⁰⁸ Mickiewicz Adam: *Konrad Wallenrod*... p. 91. Polish text: *Gdzie nie dobiegnę, pieśń moja doleci / Bard dla rycerzy w bitwach, a niewiasta / Będzie ją w domu śpiewać dla swych dzieci* (p. 87).

¹⁰⁹ Comp.: Lotman Yuri M., Uspensky Boris A.: “On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture”, *New Literary History*, Vol. 9, No. 2 *Soviet Semiotics and Criticism: An Anthology*, (Winter 1978), p. 216–217. The authors claims that culture is always connected with forgetting, since some texts are excluded and forgotten, but generally culture as a kind of non-heritable memory is oriented against forgetting, since a total forgetting means a destruction.

2.3.3. The Poet as a Tool Ruled by Poetry

As far as the relationship between the poet and poetry is concerned, songs seem to be more vivacious than the bard and have a greater influence on the reality than he has. ‘Native songs’, sung by common people, unify them supporting the formation of a (national) community. What is more, they remain partly independent of the bard (or any other singer), who is only a tool. It may be compared with the status of collective memory, which exists on the one hand independently from individuals, outside them, forming only institutionalised frames of individual memory, but on the other, in cannot survive without individuals, who are the bearers and transmitter of these memories¹¹⁰.

In regard to Halban, Witkowska stresses: “in a broader meaning the role of the memory guard is generally fulfilled by poetry, significantly elevated and distinguished in a Romantic manner in Mickiewicz’ poem and serving as a driving force of collective, national consciousness”¹¹¹. Therefore, it can be stated that the poet himself is possessed and controlled by a great and mysterious power of poetry¹¹².

Such a characteristic of poetry is also emphasised by Janion. According to her, Romantic literature is able to steer people and ‘vampirise’ the whole societies¹¹³. Who has heard a vampiric song once, becomes a vampire obsessively thinking about fighting the enemies of the motherland. Injected with the patriotic love and reigned by poetry, individuals see struggling for liberation of the homeland as the main – if not the only – goal in their lives. Listeners tend to blindly follow the words of the poet, who himself

¹¹⁰ Comp.: Olick Jeffrey K.: *The Politics of Regret...* p. 23–30.

¹¹¹ Witkowska Alina: “Adam Mickiewicz”... p. 262, [Author’s translation].

¹¹² Magdalena Siwiec perceives such an exchange of positions in the relation poet–Muse, where the Muse assumes the control over the poet as a circulation between the subject and the object. See: Siwiec Magdalena: *Romantyczna koncepcja poezji...* p. 33.

¹¹³ Janion Maria: “Polacy i ich wampirzy”... p. 44–45.

resembles a ‘vampire’¹¹⁴ (and it does not matter, whether these songs are his own product or the embodiment of collective memory). They continue the mission of ‘biting’ other people, while the poet – step by step – becomes the creator and leader of the nation. He has ability to control people: the bard is able to tame Wallenrod with one glance at him¹¹⁵. His victims do not care that fighting against oppressors of the nation they condemn themselves to death, since their new passion devastate and exhaust them.

2.3.4. Reprimanding Songs: Forcing One to Keep One’s Word

Referring to songs of another kind, presented by Mickiewicz in the narrative poem and tied to Olick’s ‘mythic logic’, to those performed during the feast, the function of poetry differs hardly from this described above. These songs function as cues and remind one of one’s duties and given promises, and reprimand one for one’s procrastination. As Chwin claims: “Halban’s words have power of an unconditional demand; sometimes they resounds with a tune of a threat or even a moral blackmail”¹¹⁶.

The addresser is the bard again, who calls Wallenrod to be active and to fulfil his duties. Therefor, the main addressee is of course the Grand Master, but there are also additional listeners: the Teutonic Knights and the Lithuanians, invited by the Germans to the castle. The former one fall asleep bored with the songs. They do not understand the Lithuanian language and do not know, what is going on around them. By contrast, the Lithuanians, who – led of Vytautas – have intended to commit adultery and start cooperating with the Teutonic Order, identify themselves with poetry to some extent:

¹¹⁴ Ujejski e.g. claims that Halban seems not to be a human being, rather a “demonic voice of national duties” (Ujejski Józef: “Wstęp”... p. XIII, [Author’s translation]). Also other scholars argue for a symbolic status of the bard. Comp.: p. 25–26 in this thesis.

¹¹⁵ The impact of poetry on individuals and their personal happiness in *Konrad Wallenrod* will be developed in the next subchapter.

¹¹⁶ Chwin Stefan: “Bunt indywidualistyczny”... p. 57, [Author’s translation].

*They noted all how when the Wajdelote [the Lithuanian bard]
Of traitors spoke, a change o'er Witold [Vytautas] came.
Livid he grew and pale again he blushed,
Alike tormented by his rage and shame¹¹⁷.*

Under the impact of the poet, the Lithuanian knights change their intentions and fight against the Germans. Their behaviour can be linked to the fact that Wallenrod alike they are members of the same (national) community and gained similar education. Having the same origin and background as the Grand Master, they possess similar cultural codes, necessary to decode contents hidden in poetry. They do it, however, on a different level than Wallenrod¹¹⁸. They feel ashamed, as they have been close to become disloyal to the motherland. Wallenrod, in turn, interprets the song more literary, as telling about him, and finally promises to keep his word given many years before.

2.3.5. Subconclusion

On the whole, both didactic songs, songs protecting the national soul and reminder-songs can be described as patriotic or national. They are all media of memory in their different variations: storage, circulation and cue, whereby few functions are fulfilled simultaneously by one kind of songs and different songs have the same function.

Consequently, poetry aims at preserving memory of the heroic past, brave deeds of the forefathers¹¹⁹ and to safeguard the quintessence of (national) culture. In the long run, it should contribute to regaining independence through preparing next generations of

¹¹⁷ Mickiewicz Adam: *Konrad Wallenrod*... p. 38. Polish text: *Postrzegli wszyscy, kiedy wajdelota / Mówił o zdrajcach, jak się Witold mienił. / Zsiniał, pobladnął, znowu się czerwienił, / Dręczyły go równie i gniew, i sromota* (p. 40).

¹¹⁸ Comp.: Barthes Roland: *Mythologies*... and Footnotes 40 and 95 in this thesis.

¹¹⁹ Comp.: "This order to remember the forefathers' deeds will probably form the most important kind of collective memory in Polish Romantic literature, that is, family memory, memory of the house, memory of brotherhood of the nobility" (Trybuś Krzysztof: *Pamięć romantyzmu*... p. 57, [Author's translation].

conscious members of a given (national) community since it persuades listeners to be active instead of waiting passively for the development of the situation¹²⁰.

Especially didactic and commemorating songs used in education of young people may be associated with the canon consisting of issues, which belong to collective memory and support spreading cultural codes. They act according to the rules of the mythic logic, remaining authoritarian and unquestioned.

The songs of another kind are applied “in order to influence people, whose patriotic feelings have eased off or who have forgotten about their patriotic duties”¹²¹ – as it is to agree with Chwin – and demand knowledge of the first type of songs. They constitute namely a next step of understanding, the denotation in semiotic terms¹²².

Furthermore, poetry serves as means of communication. Enemies, brought up in a different culture, are not able to understand its real meaning and fall asleep (or as the censorship in the Russian Empire do not see any danger in publishing such a text as Mickiewicz’ *Konrad Wallenrod*).

In a radical reading, they might also give behavioural patterns. As Tretiak claims “a continuous chain of songs and acts, continuous pouring of life in poetry and poetry in life of”¹²³ takes place there. With songs telling about Wallenrod, Halban plans to encourage other youths to sacrifice themselves for the common good.

¹²⁰ That is consistent with a general idea of poetry represented by Mickiewicz, the so-called project of ‘poetry of act’ (*poezja czynu*). Comp.: Trojanowiczowa, Zofia “Dylematy romantycznego patriotyzmu”... p. 270–274; Witkowska Alina: “Adam Mickiewicz”... p. 294.

¹²¹ Chwin Stefan: “Bunt indywidualistyczny”... p. 57, [Author’s translation].

¹²² Comp.: Hall Stuart: “The Work of Representation”... p. 15–64.

¹²³ Tretiak Józef: “Idea *Wallenroda*”... p. 25.

2.4. The Evolution of Konrad Wallenrod's Attitude Towards Poetry

After having distinguished various functions of poetry in *Konrad Wallenrod* and having presented their relation to collective memory, now the impact, which the bard's singing (that is collective memory transmitted in this way) has had on the main character and his personal life will be discussed. Investigating more deeply Alf's/ Wallenrod's attitude towards Halban, a distinct change in his perception of poetry is eye-catching – from blind adoration and admiration of the words of the bard to the hate of bard.

2.4.1. Unquestioning Admiration

As mentioned above, thanks to the bard Alf, who grows far away from his home, gets a Lithuanian identity and learns his duties towards his native country. Kleiner notices: "This Lithuanian [Alf] is not entirely out of touch with his fatherland. A link between him and the native country is constituted by his friend, being like an embodiment of Lithuanianess, but equally wearing a mask"¹²⁴. Since Alf has no memories from Lithuania and his connection with relatives has been cut off, the 'natural', emotional relationship to this territory should be theoretically missing¹²⁵.

But, it exists although not in the same manner as in the case of other inhabitants of Lithuania. Chwin calls it "a relationship from distance"¹²⁶, because it is not based on participation in the life of community, rather is a bound of "a telluric character.

¹²⁴ Kleiner Juliusz: *Zarys dziejów literatury polskiej...* p. 214, [Author's translation].

¹²⁵ Referring to Ferdinand Tönnisen's concept of community, there are three types of community: the natural community of blood, which is concretised in a community of the territory, which evolves in turn into a community of the soul. The last one is characterised by some common goals (Tönnis Ferdinand : *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, Wiesbaden 2012, p. 27–70). Wallenrod does not belong to the community of territory, while the community of blood have been broken down before many years and only restituted by Halban.

¹²⁶ Chwin Stefan: "Porwany za młodu"... p. 51, [Author's translation]. Wallenrod did not know Lithuania. The contact with Lithuanian nature rouses – first of all – Wallenrod with his Lithuanian identity, not participation in the life of the community. Comp.: (Mickiewicz Adam: *Konrad Wallenrod...* p. 47). Polish text: *On mnie często ku brzegom Niemna siniego prowadził, / Stamtąd lubilem na mile góry ojcyste spoglądać* (p. 49).

Wallenrod [...] is a child of the native soil, a child of the place, he feels kinship with Lithuanian flora, water, air”¹²⁷. To some extent it is an imagined tie, resulted from education¹²⁸. Alf had had to be taught and was taught that the given area, unknown to him personally, is of special importance for his identity¹²⁹.

Consequently, memory, acquired in this way, is not his own, but belongs to the whole community and actually – strictly speaking – to nobody, since no-one experienced it on one’s own. Telling the boy about the previous greatness of Lithuania and heroic deeds of his forefathers, Halban arouses the love for the distant motherland in his pupil and kindles patriotic feelings, hatred towards Germans and greed for revenge:

*He told of Litwa [Lithuania], cheered my longing soul
With his caresses, song, and with the sound
Of the Litvanian [Lithuanian] speech
[...]
He dried my tears, but kindled in me vengeance
Against the Germans*¹³⁰.

Moreover, Halban’s singing has a commemorating function, since it recalls the past events and commemorates eminent persons. Also Wallenrod himself is to become one of such national heroes after his death praised in ‘native songs’.

2.4.2. The Peak of the Patriotic Feelings

Through Halban’s efforts Alf, living among the Teutonic Knights, becomes a conscious member of the Lithuanian community. Memories of his ancestors prevent his

¹²⁷ Chwin Stefan: “Porwany za młodu”... p. 49.

¹²⁸ Comp.: Anderson Benedict: *Imagined Communities*, London: 1983. Anderson saw the nation as an ‘imagined political community’, not as a natural and prior given phenomenon.

¹²⁹ Comp.: “The perception of a territory understood as one’s fatherland and an affection with it are closely tied to building one’s individual and collective identity on the basis of memory about the past” (Głowacka-Grajpe Małgorzata: “Ojczyzna”, *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, ed. Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska and Robert Traba, Warszawa 2014, p. 311, [Author’s translation]).

¹³⁰ Mickiewicz Adam: *Konrad Wallenrod*... p. 47. Polish text: *Rozprawiał o Litwie, duszę stęsknioną orzeźwiał / Pieszczotami i dźwiękiem mowy ojczystej, i pieśnią. / [...] łzy mi ocierał, a zemstę / Przeciw Niemcom podniecał* (p. 49–50).

Germanisation and enable him integration within the Lithuanian community when he deserts to it. However, in the long run those memories disturb him to stay in Lithuania, because he cannot be happy there as long as the country is persecuted:

*Yet found no happiness in heart or home.
For in the country was there blessing none*¹³¹.

Another desertion – this time from Lithuania, from the country Alf dreamed of – constitute the climax. On the one hand his patriotic feelings, fanned from his early childhood by the bard, reach their apotheosis gaining the upper hand over the love for a woman¹³² and the personal fulfilment. Memory of the free country triumphs, while the main character is overcome with hunger for vengeance. On the other hand, collective memory, which by nature should consolidate a community, disintegrates it. Walter Alf consciously leaves (in a physical, literal sense) the group of his countrymen and becomes a lonely freedom fighter of the national matter. After all, such an alienation, some special, extraordinary features (in Wallenrod's case it is the fact of being a cultural hybrid¹³³, because he lives in-between two cultures, knows perfectly both the German and the Lithuanian community and feels some kind of affiliation to both of them) as well as the engagement in crazy, sometimes dare-devil plans in order to change the world may be seen as romantic elements of this poem¹³⁴.

¹³¹ Ibid.: p. 53. Polish text: *Szczęścia w domu nie znalazł, bo go nie było w ojczyźnie*. (p. 54).

¹³² Such a tendency can be observed in Mickiewicz's oeuvre. The main character of *Forefathers* (Part IV) written 1820–1821 – Gustav – goes mad because of his unhappy love for an idealised woman. Both in *Konrad Wallenrod* and *Forefathers* (Part III) the love for the motherland is most valued.

¹³³ According to Homi K. Bhabha one may live in-between two or more cultures respectively ethnic groups. Such a person becomes a cultural hybrid. Comp. Bhabha Homi K.: "Introduction", *Location of Culture*, London 2010, p. 1–27. Chwin notices that Konrad feels like a foreigner not only among the Germans, but also among the Lithuanians: "he is fascinated with Western-European christian culture, not with the Lithuanian life-style [...] both the war customs as the daily habits are strange to him [...] He has a different reconnaissance of the military-political situation" (Chwin Stefan: "Porwany za młodu"... p. 51–52, [Author's translation]).

¹³⁴ Comp. e.g.: Piwońska Marta: "Człowiek i bohater", *Problemy polskiego romantyzmu*, ed. Maria Żmigrodzka, Wrocław 1974, p. 95–96.

However, hunger of revenge weakens with age. When there is a real chance to destroy the Teutonic Order from inside, when Alf – known as Konrad Wallenrod – assumes the position of the Grand Master, he puts his destiny off and is not raring to execute his resolution. Feeling like a victim, someone incurably ill, he is sized by melancholy¹³⁵, which is responsible for his passivity. This does not allow him to espouse the cause in a constructive manner, since he has been disoriented. He is often immersed in thoughts about, what he has actually lost in his life and what he really wants.

At the same time, he dreams – like all melancholic people – about fulfilment and calmness¹³⁶, which unfortunately are not to be achieved. Neither does he have possibility to change circumstances he is living in. He is not able to forget, since traces of the loss are left everywhere. His certainty is additionally shaken by singing of a female hermit, his Lithuanian wife Aldona, who was abandoned by him many years earlier and lives now in a tower close to the castle. She recalls him the past, which results in nostalgia – emotional returning in mind to the lost love and home¹³⁷.

Although patriotic fever subsides, it leaves an irremovable brand in Wallenrod's mind. Memories of the promise, given many years before, and his sacrifices resemble Freudian trauma, forced out from one's consciousness, but recorded deeply in

¹³⁵ Comp.: "Melancholy does not allow to made any key settlement of a question, since the subject usually [...] does not know, what it has lost and it really looks for. [...] It [the subject] has the impression that it has lost all support, and – what is more – it founds the ruins of the old world at every step" (Bałus Wojciech: "Melancholia", *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, ed. Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska and Robert Traba, Warszawa 2014, p. 222 [Author's translation]).

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Comp.: Lewicka Maria, Prusik Monika, Zaleski Marek: "Nostalgia", *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, ed. Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska and Robert Traba, Warszawa 2014, p. 274–278.

unconsciousness¹³⁸. They tend to come back to the person in the less expected moment, bringing back by a word, a view, a taste etc. Involuntary memories¹³⁹, aroused in this way, cause Wallenrod pain. His face becomes glum and he loses himself in thoughts:

*[...] unmeaning word,
That had no sense for others, woke in him
Passionate stirrings. These words: Fatherland,
Duty, Beloved, — the mention of Crusades,
And Litwa [Lithuania], all the mirth of Wallenrod
Instantly poisoned. Hearing them, again
He turned away his countenance, again
Became to all around insensible.
And buried him in thoughts mysterious¹⁴⁰.*

Wallenrod cannot control his reactions. As Chwin claims: “Wallenrod’s facial expression [...] disclose an ongoing conflict between the ‘mask’ dictated himself and his real ‘face’”¹⁴¹, but as it will be showed below, putting on the mask is not his own choice. Soothing moral agony with alcohol, he behaves as if some overpowering energy had forced him to an almost suicidal revealing of the truth. Only thanks to strong power of his will and Halban’s interventions it does not come to a self-unmasking¹⁴².

¹³⁸ Besides the division in the id, ego and super-ego, Freud divided the mind into the conscious and the unconscious mind. The former consists of the ego, while the latter encompasses the id and super-ego (the super-ego may be partly reflected in consciousness). The unconsciousness refers to such issues of which people are unaware or become unaware as a result of forcing something out from their consciousness. Otherwise, they would not be able to function, since the pressure put on their mind would be too big. Comp.: Freud Sigmund: “Das Ich und das Es”... p. 254–259.

¹³⁹ An involuntary memory appears in one’s memory under the impact of an unexpected and unforeseeable impulse, often recalling some dramatic past, which one forced out. Marcel Proust’s novel *In Search of Lost Time* and the madeleine episode constitute the origin of this idea. Comp.: Poulet Georges: “Proust and Human Time”, *A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. René Girard, New York 1962, p. 156–161; Assmann Aleida: “Ausgraben”, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, München 1999, p. 165. This seems also be similar to literature as a cue. Comp.: Erll Astrid: “Literatur als Medium”... p. 255.

¹⁴⁰ Mickiewicz Adam: *Konrad Wallenrod*... p. 6. Polish text: *lada słówko obojętne, / Które dla drugich nie miało znaczenia, / W nim obudzało wzruszenia namiętne; / Słowa: ojczyzna, powinność, kochanka, / O krucjatach i o Litwie wzmianka / Nagle wesołość Wallenroda truły; / Słyszac je, znowu odwracał oblicze, / Znowu na wszystko stawał się nieczuły / I pogrążał się w dумы tajemnicze* (p. 11).

¹⁴¹ Chwin Stefan: “Makiawelizm i imperatyw jawności”, *Literatura a zdrada*, Kraków 1993, p. 19, [Author’s translation].

¹⁴² Comp.: Ibid.: p. 18, [Author’s translation].

Freud understands collective memory as something hereditary, recorded in unconsciousness and constrained, since – according to him – it is a result of pressure put on an individual's soul by dramatic experiences¹⁴³. Although Mickiewicz does not get on with his ideas so far, Wallenrod's behaviour results partly from his origin. Of course, he has some dramatic experiences behind himself: he lost the family in his childhood and became a displaced person. Because he is a Lithuanian, he is also a slave – as Halban teaches him – and does not need to respect any ethical rules:

*the only
Weapon that slaves may use is treachery*¹⁴⁴.

Moreover, Wallenrod knows exactly, what is expected of him. Poetry highlights it additionally and leads to new remorse. It can be stated that the necessity of an adultery commitment forms his super-ego, which “continues to function in a way as the pressure exerted by the outer world on individuals; it observes the ego, gives orders to it and threatens it with punishments, exactly as parents, whose place it has taken”¹⁴⁵, which is the reason why Wallenrod tries to satisfy this part of the psychic apparatus, which permanently exerts pressure on his mind.

2.4.3. Confession and the Inner Conflict Caused by Poetry

The longer Wallenrod stays in the Teutonic castle, the guiltier he feels, the more twinges of conscience and doubts he has, because as the Grand Master he should protect his knights and take the responsibility for the people, who has selected him, trusted and

¹⁴³ Assmann Jan: “Erinnern, um dazugehören”... p. 62–66.

¹⁴⁴ Mickiewicz Adam: *Konrad Wallenrod*... p. 49. This sentence appeared and disappeared in different editions. The Polish text is: *Tyś niewolnik, jedyna broń niewolników zdrada* (p. 51).

¹⁴⁵ Freud Sigmund: *Abriss der Psychoanalyse*... p. 101 [Author's translation]. Moreover, the super-ego is usually associated with parents and their impact on children. It is especially interesting remembering that home country, called motherland/fatherland, was often depicted as mother of the nation. (Comp.: Janion Maria “Artysta romantyczny”... p. 222).

believed in him. He undergoes also the knight's code of chivalry¹⁴⁶, which makes his position more complicated, since whatever he decides to do, he will lose the honour. Additionally, "Even when the postulate is somehow reversed, so that both sides of the conflict are wrong and so that the Order's intention to destroy Lithuania is as wrong as Wallenrod's to destroy the Order, even in this negative balance Wallenrod's treason causes an ethical disturbance"¹⁴⁷.

Unfortunately, it is too late to withdraw. The past has a significant impact on his behaviour determining it in terms of the sense of morality. Awareness of the vengeance causes an inner conflict. Although Wallenrod tries to delay his revenge, he must keep the promise. The bard reminds him about it during the feast in the castle.

Accordingly, there is some kind of pressure – an important part of memory emphasised among others by Freud¹⁴⁸ and Olick¹⁴⁹. The Lithuanian community, embodied by the bard, does not allow Wallenrod to forget and demands keeping the word. Poetry hinders working-out the trauma and overlooking the legacy of the past. The main character, yield to demands of the community, promises eventually to meet his commitment.

Such a development of the character is consistent with the Romantic concept. As Janion notices "the ideal of a hero, either a mythical or knight's, whose biography always has a Chivalry structure of an initial myth, is prominent [here]"¹⁵⁰. Wallenrod has to overcome himself, guided by a master (here the bard or in metaphorical sense: poetry, that is, collective memory), who forces him to be loyal to ideals of his childhood and to

¹⁴⁶ More about the conflict between values of the chivalric code (a set of rules to be respected by knights: among other things an obligation to protect the defenceless and to speak the truth) and wearing a mask, see: Chwin Stefan: "Etos rycerski wobec 'etosu maski'", *Literatura a zdrada*, Kraków 1993, p. 25–29 and more generally, see e.g.: Ossowska Maria: *Ethos rycerski i jego odmiany*, Warszawa 1973.

¹⁴⁷ Zentuan Konstanty: "Mickiewicz' *Konrad Wallenrod*"... p. 156.

¹⁴⁸ Comp.: Assmann Jan: "Erinnern, um dazugehören"... p. 63.

¹⁴⁹ Comp.: Olick Jeffrey K.: *The Politics of Regret* ... p. 38–42.

¹⁵⁰ Janion Maria: *Czas formy otwartej*, Warszawa 1984, p. 14, [Author's translation].

execute his intentions. What is more, there is a special, emotional relationship between the teacher and the pupil. Halban has replaced Alf his lost family and has become his closest friend. Nonetheless, after years Wallenrod seems not to be completely convinced of the appropriateness and sense of his own actions. Reprimanded by the bard, he announces the triumph of the poet, but at once he asks for more wine:

*You winnest! War! what triumph for a poet!
Give to me wine; now my designs are working*¹⁵¹.

Wallenrod's attitude towards poetry differs dramatically from this presented by him in the youth. He realises that he has been infected with hunger for revenge, and although the effect of the poison weakened in course of time, it cannot be completely eliminated. In Chwin's opinion there is a hidden conflict between "the rule over souls" – "ideologists' of patriotism" – and "executors of patriotic orders"¹⁵². Because Wallenrod is only a part of a national master plan, he does not have any influence on his life. He must follow the words of the poet, who reigns over the national soul and uses the Grand Master in the achievement of a collective goal. Instead of fulfilling his own will, the main character becomes a 'slave of poetry'¹⁵³.

2.4.4. Hatred – Discovering the 'Poisonous' Effect of Poetry

Certain meanings attributed to the past are forced upon members of the community by an institutionalised and canonised narrative about the past. Those meanings are selected as particularly important and interpreted according to the norms and goals of the authorities. By contrast, other issues fall into obligation since they have not been approved during selection. Halban had choice and decided upon, which aspects of the

¹⁵¹ Mickiewicz Adam: *Konrad Wallenrod*... p. 64. Polish text: *Wygrałeś! Wojna, tryumf dla poety, / Dajcie mi wino, spełnił się zamiar* (p. 62).

¹⁵² Chwin Stefan: "Bunt indywidualistyczny"... p. 59, [Author's translation].

¹⁵³ Witkowska Alina: "Adam Mickiewicz"... p. 262

past were to be explained to Alf and which omitted. In this way, he had latitude forming consciousness and the worldview of his pupil. If Halban had downplayed some parts of the problematic coexistence of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Teutonic Order, Alf could have not burned with hate to the Germans. So, through letting forget some elements of the past, the bard could have contributed to the reconciliation between nations, instead of reproducing old resentments¹⁵⁴.

Wallenrod comes to a similar conclusion: poetry does not cheer longing souls. Quite the opposite. Though it seems that Alf took in the affiliation to the Lithuanian community voluntarily, in fact he did not have any choice – he was doomed to greatness¹⁵⁵ and Halban's singing fuelled his emotional engagement. After years, Wallenrod curses the songs as poison that destroyed his life, developing the readiness of sacrificing himself and his own happiness in order to liberate the motherland at any price. However, they happen to bring only suffering and misery¹⁵⁶. What is more, shortly before his death, he argues that the Germans are human beings as well¹⁵⁷. Therefore, his whole bitterness and hatred are aimed at the bards¹⁵⁸. Wallenrod tells about them:

*Yet in the cradle doth your traitorous song
Circle the infant's breast in reptile form,
And cruellest poison sheds into the soul,
Foolish desire of praise and patriot love*¹⁵⁹.

¹⁵⁴ Societies may also benefit from forgetting some events, dividing them into enemies. Comp.: Meier Christian: *Das Gebot zu vergessen und die Unabweisbarkeit des Erinnerns*, München 2010.

¹⁵⁵ Comp.: Chwin Stefan: "Bunt indywidualistyczny"... p. 56.

¹⁵⁶ Comp.: Kleiner Juliusz: *Zarys dziejów literatury polskiej*... p. 216.

¹⁵⁷ Comp.: "Enough of vengeance. Germans, too, are men" (Mickiewicz Adam: *Konrad Wallenrod*... p. 81). Polish text: *Już dość zemsty, i Niemcy są ludzie* (p. 79).

¹⁵⁸ Zentuan perceives it as a 'device of removing the guilt', which is supposed to heal Wallenrod's soul and overcome the inner conflict. Comp.: Zentuan Konstanty: "Mickiewicz' *Konrad Wallenrod*"... p. 158.

¹⁵⁹ Mickiewicz Adam: *Konrad Wallenrod*... p. 63. Polish text: *Jeszcze w kolebce wasza pieśń zdradziecka / Na kształt gądziny owija pierś dziecka / I wlewa w duszę najsroźsze trucizny, / Głupią chęć sławy i miłość ojczyzny* (p. 61–62).

Inabilities to forget and live further are according to Nietzsche¹⁶⁰ the feature of human beings. He perceives memory – like Wallenrod – as something causing pain and sufferings, depriving people of happiness and driving them into remorse. By contrast, animals (more exactly: the herd of beasts) can be honest and happy, since they live to fight another day (“at the mercy of the moment”¹⁶¹), without having any memories or reflections, and thus being free from melancholy and fatigue. But people cannot get rid of the past and look forward just to the future. A memory of “the moment, that is here and gone, that was nothing before and nothing after, returns like a spectre to trouble the quiet of a later moment”¹⁶². It is the reason, why they still count on the past.

This is Wallenrod’s case – permanently, he has an impression that he has lost something and that he does something against his will. On the one hand, he is not able to act, paralysed by his responsibilities (as the Lithuanian and as the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order) and expectations of the community expressed by the bard¹⁶³, but he cannot forget the past and enjoy his life in Marienburg either. On the other hand, although he could not appreciate, what he already had, living with Aldona in Lithuania, since his happiness depended on the happiness of the country. But coming back to the castle, he is nostalgic and broods on, what he has sacrificed. Therefore, he is undecided, reluctant to fight and driven by emotions. He resembles the human being described by Nietzsche: a person permanently wrestling with the burden of the past, which makes the normal life impossible: “man is always resisting the great and continually increasing

¹⁶⁰ Nietzsche Friedrich: “The Use and Abuse of History”... [online].

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ In this respect, Wallenrod resembles Hamlet from the Shakespearean drama, who also was overburdened with the mission he was entrusted with. More about Hamlet and his behaviour, see: Foakes Reginald A.: “Hamlet and Hamletism”, *Hamlet Versus Lear*, Cambridge 1993, p. 12–44.

weight of the past; it presses him down, and bows his shoulders; he travels with a dark invisible burden that he can plausibly disown”¹⁶⁴.

Nietzsche claims as well that the individual, who decides to belong to a community and to assume all norms and duties resulting from the membership in this community, chooses “memory of one’s will” that is “an active *wish* not to be free of the matter again, an on-going and continuing desire for what one willed at a particular time”¹⁶⁵. The group does not want to forget something, which is considered fundamental to the existence of this group. This is included in the canon and guarantees stability. Memory is, thus, a consequence of a decision made collectively by a community, while the voice of single individuals is not taken into account. “People”, whoever it is actually, comes to the conclusion that “a couple of ideas are to be made indissoluble, omnipresent, unforgettable, ‘fixed’, in order to hypnotize the entire nervous and intellectual system through these ‘fixed ideas’”¹⁶⁶, and all members of the community have to respect it. Because this oblivion is connected with a punishment¹⁶⁷, they have to develop memory. Otherwise they could not respect its laws and keep promises, that is, form a community. So an individual is forced to ‘produce’ memory in order to belong to a group and respect its rules. Nevertheless, fulfilling their duties, members often give up their own benefits, since ‘An individual I’ is replaced by ‘a social I’, where the society notes down all its norms and demands¹⁶⁸.

Wallenrod cannot protest against any norms, he was taught by the bard, since they confirm his affiliation to the Lithuanian nation and meet his need for belonging. Moreover, he did not have a chance in his childhood to confront those norms with other

¹⁶⁴ Nietzsche Friedrich: “The Use and Abuse of History”... [online].

¹⁶⁵ Nietzsche Friedrich: *On the Genealogy of Morals*... [online].

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Assmann Jan: “Erinnern, um dazugehören”... p. 52.

Lithuanian rules – Halban was the only member of the Lithuanian community, who Alf was in touch with. Wallenrod serves, thus, as a tool for the achievement of the goal, crucial for the whole group and formulated by the bard. As Ujejski claims: “Wallenrod has been only an ideal great man”¹⁶⁹ His personal happiness is of minor importance, also for him in the beginning. That is, why he does not hesitate to sacrifice itself. But after the execution of his plan and fulfilment of his dream, he realises that he cannot turn back time and will never live happily with Aldona. He commits suicide, as he does not have any other goal in his life and experiences burnout.

2.4.5. Subconclusion

Having become the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, Konrad Wallenrod is no more as eager to destroy the perennial enemy of his fatherland as in his youth. Since his attitude towards the Germans is less radical now, he agonised for days. There is no good alternative – he may lose his honour acting against the chivalry and betraying the knights subjected to him or breaking his word and letting his countrymen down. Being immersed in melancholy and losing himself in despair, he blames the bard for his situation and puts fulfilling his promise off. Halban, who has given Wallenrod the Lithuanian identity, has also – according to the Grand Master – poisoned his soul.

Assuming the fact that Wallenrod evolves in course of time and his attitude towards poetry changes, as well as knowing his doubts, it is clear that he was depicted as a human being. The same is not to be said about Halban, who does not have any hesitations. He remains untouched by changing circumstances. What is more, Mickiewicz does not describe him in such detailed way as he characterises Wallenrod. Therefore, the bard seems to be inhuman, demonic and steered by mysterious powers.

¹⁶⁹ Ujejski Józef: “Wstęp”... p. XIV, [Author’s translation].

He resembles a ‘vampire’ focused only on the one thing: singing and so poisoning his countrymen with patriotic mania. But poetry reigns also over Halban and uses him to promote certain ideas. After Wallenrod’s death, the bard’s songs are supposed to infect new generations of patriots. The bard himself assures of it:

*[...] they shall sing them, and in future days
Some venger shall arise from out our bones*¹⁷⁰.

On the whole, the community benefits of (national) literature, since it is able to survive in unfavourable conditions. Patriotic literature helps to save a (national or ethnic) group ‘vampirising’ its members, that is, bringing them up in a desired way. However, it rarely leads individuals to personal happiness. Collective memory, embodied in poetry, may be perceived as poison, leading infected people to patriotic madness and later to doom. It is to agree with Chwin noticing that “The man, who undergoes the *wajdelota*’s singing, seems to be in the context of those images [the gothic topics of grim] bitten by a spectre [*upiór*] of the song”¹⁷¹.

This motif of ‘vampirising’ a community will be discussed more extensively in the following chapter dedicated to *Forefathers* (Part III), where the stress shifts towards ‘vampiric’ features of a poet and the intimate relationship between the poet and poetry.

¹⁷⁰ Mickiewicz Adam: *Konrad Wallenrod*... p. 91. Polish text: *[...] kiedyś w przyszłości / Z tej pieśni wstanie mściciel naszych kości!* (p. 87).

¹⁷¹ Chwin Stefan: “Bunt indywidualistyczny”... p. 60 [Author’s translation]. As far as the next chapter is concerned, it is important to stress that Chwin uses the word *upiór*.

3. *Forefathers* (Part III) – Poetry vs. the Poet

3.1. The Main Plot and the Origin of the Third Part of the Drama Cycle

Directly after the failure of the November Uprising (Mickiewicz did not take part in it, since he did not manage to come back to Congress Poland from his journey around Europe¹⁷²), the poet returned to writing an unfinished drama cycle *Forefathers* and published next part of it in 1832 (known as Part III¹⁷³). According to Eligiusz Szymanis, the author intended to reinterpret the painful defeat into a spiritual victory in historical-philosophical terms and – referring to Christianity – to give a new sense to sufferings of his countrymen¹⁷⁴. This was in general a visible trend in Polish literature¹⁷⁵.

Nonetheless, *Forefathers* (Part III) – instead of the revolt of 1830/1831 – depicts events taking place in 1823 among nation-minded people in Vilnius – Mickiewicz was one of them¹⁷⁶. His arrest and trial resulted in an up-country exile (during it he wrote *Konrad Wallenrod*), so this drama is partly based on the author's own experience. Hence, some characters and events have their prototypes in reality and the young poet Conrad tends to be identified with Mickiewicz himself¹⁷⁷.

¹⁷² This was also a cause of Mickiewicz' later remorse. Comp.: Jastrun Mieczysław: *Mickiewicz...* p. 261–283.

¹⁷³ There is no consensus, why this part is referred to as Part III. The most popular explanation is that it was published as third in a row. Comp.: Szymanis Eligiusz: "Warum ist die Dresdener 'Ahenfeier'..." p. 88–89.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Comp.: "it [the defeat] provoked a deep crisis in Polish romantic poetry, which gradually turned toward a tone of resignation and away from its previous ambitious and even heroic striving [...] Polish poetry finally subjected itself to mysticism" (Zentuan Konstanty: "Mickiewicz' *Konrad Wallenrod*"... p. 150, [Author's translation]).

¹⁷⁶ Jastrun Mieczysław: *Mickiewicz...* p. 109–115.

¹⁷⁷ Comp. e.g.: Tretiak Józef: "Cześć Mickiewicza dla Najświętszej Panny", *Kto jest Mickiewicz*, Kraków 1924, p. 48.

In his drama Mickiewicz resigned using the Aesopian language – it was not necessary, since it was written in Dresden¹⁷⁸. Although he talks directly about the then situation on the territory belonging prior to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the drama is not realistic. It has a metaphysical dimension, since Mickiewicz added to the drama world some fantastic characters like angels, who were absent in the narrative poem¹⁷⁹.

To describe the plot of *Forefathers* (Part III) in few words: several Lithuanian men have been imprisoned on behalf of the Russian curator of education and science, the supporter of Russification, Nikolay Novosiltsev, and spend the Christmas Eve in the prison in Vilnius. This place serves Mickiewicz as the main settings although the plot is set actually in many places both in Poland and Lithuania (directly or recalled in stories reported by prisoners) as well as on two different levels (human and divine).

Conrad functions as the main character¹⁸⁰, albeit he appears in person only in a few scenes and is the object of prayers in few others. Generally speaking, there are several supporting motives, forming the central theme of Part III. The text seems not to tell the story of a chosen individual, but depict the whole generation of the Poles (and Lithuanians), which resist the Russian oppressors. Furthermore, it provides a promising vision of the future – ‘Poland as Messiah of nations’¹⁸¹.

¹⁷⁸ By contrast to other parts, Part III was not composed in Kaunas and Vilnius (*Dziady kowieńsko-wileńskie*), but in Dresden (*Dziady drezdeńskie*).

¹⁷⁹ Though the life of Alf-Wallenrod is supposed to respond to historical facts, Mickiewicz freely selected them. Moreover, he added some characters. See e.g.: Górski Konrad: *Adam Mickiewicz...* p. 68–69.

¹⁸⁰ He is also a link between different parts of the cycle – he appears in Part II as a spectre [*widmo*] during the celebration of the All Souls’ Day (Forefathers’ Eve); in Part IV he is called Gustav and is an unhappy lover. At the beginning of Part III Gustav dies and Conrad is born, which may metaphorically describe the evolution from the Romantic idea of an unhappy love for a woman to the love for the motherland.

¹⁸¹ Mickiewicz had turned with this piece of writing to messianism, which he developed later in *Księgi narodu polskiego i pielgrzymstwa polskiego* [1832, *The Books of the Polish People and of the Polish Pilgrimage*]. More about messianism, see: Walicki Andrzej: *Mesjanizm Adama Mickiewicza w perspektywie porównawczej*, Warszawa 2006 and Cunico Gerardo: “Messianismus bei Mickiewicz”, *Von Polen, Poesie und Politik. Adam Mickiewicz 1798–1998*, Tübingen 1998, p. 171–196.

Simultaneously, this part of *Forefathers* may be seen as a poetical meta-text defending the position of a poet in an occupied country and specifying his ontological status. By contrast to Halban from *Konrad Wallenrod*, Conrad is a Romantic genius that does not repeat old songs, rather composes his inspired poetry. However, he is socially oriented in his creative activity and sings with a certain intention: to liberate the motherland.

Moreover, the name of the drama cycle itself can be tied to the issue of collective memory twofold. On the one hand, it refers to the commemorating ritual, performed at the All Saints' Day. On the other, as Trybuś notices: "*Dziady* mean forefathers [...] they fulfil the role of memory guards in regard to the past, living in oral evocation"¹⁸². Forefathers with their deeds constitute the object of commemoration they themselves support collective memory by transmitting its contents to their descendants.

3.2. Interpretations, Previous Research and Outline of The Thesis

The thesis focuses on fragments, in which Conrad appears personally, that is, mainly on the prologue and few scenes set in the prison. Particularly interested are his three songs: the 'vampiric' song¹⁸³, which inspired Janion to formulate her theory, a short meta-poetic text performed in the cell full of patriots, that is, the so-called *Small Improvisation* [*Mała improwizacja*] and another improvisation¹⁸⁴, which is called *Great Improvisation* [*Wielka improwizacja*] and addressed directly to God.

¹⁸² Trybuś Krzysztof: *Pamięć romantyzmu ...* p. 123, [Author's translation].

¹⁸³ Comp.: Mickiewicz Adam: "Part III", *Forefathers*, London 1968, p. 163. The song in question is a wild song called in the drama text 'a pagan song' [*pieśń pogańska*] by the priest Father Lwowicz and 'a fiendish song' [*pieśń szatańska*] by Corporal (Polish text: Mickiewicz Adam: *Dziady*, Kraków 1949, p.155–156 – all quotations of *Forefathers* came from those two editions of the drama).

¹⁸⁴ The term 'improvisation' does not refer to a literary genre, but constitutes rather 'poetry in poetry' and means a poetic trans, an artistic explosion caused by inspiration. Stefanowska Zofia: "Wielka – tak, ale dlaczego improwizacja?", *Próba zdrowego rozumu*, Warszawa 1955, p. 71–86 and Krukowska Halina: *Noc romantyczna...* p. 196 .

There is no doubt, what Conrad is singing about, since the lyrics of his songs are noted down in the drama. However, one may only guess, which impact his poetry has on society. On the one hand, the time-span is too short to observe any social respond to the words of the poet. On the other, Conrad's situation is very inconvenient, as he is imprisoned and surrounded already with patriots, and therefore, his poetry is not confronted with 'real' society. However, it is possible to estimate intentions of his singing as well as the relation between poetry and the poet. That is why those two aspects will be highlighted in this part of Analysis. Although the social, mnemonic role of poetry is not as visible as well as in case of *Konrad Wallenrod*, the mechanism of 'infecting' people itself can be described more extensively.

Analysing *Forefathers* (Part III), I refer to conclusions drawn in previous chapters, first of all in regard to the Lithuanian bard as a demonic being¹⁸⁵. That contradicts the approaches applied often in previous research, which lined the character of Conrad with Wallenrod. Szymanis e.g. argues: "Conrad made the same mistake in *Improvisation* as the tragic Teutonic Knight [Wallenrod], who also wanted to save the motherland without God"¹⁸⁶. Although I see a connection between those characters (e.g. in their attitude towards enemies and hunger of revenge), the link between Conrad and Halban is more relevant in case of my interpretation combining poetry and memory.

3.3. The Poet as a Vampiric Embodiment of the Motherland

The connotation vampire-motherland appears many times in various Romantic texts as one of the Romantic images for the motherland: "The home country as a vampire and its avengers as vampires complete the overall image, which was hidden between the lines

¹⁸⁵ Chwin Stefan: "Bunt indywidualistyczny" ... p. 60 and Footnote 84 in this thesis.

¹⁸⁶ Szymanis Eligiusz: "Warum ist die Dresdener 'Ahenfeier'" ... p. 95, [Author's translation].

in many Polish Romantic works”¹⁸⁷. However, in order to understand, what ‘a vampiric embodiment of the motherland’ may mean, a ‘vampire’ has to be defined in the first line. Interestingly, this mysterious being is often argued to originate primarily from the territory inhabited by Slavic tribes and belong to folk culture in Southern and East-Central Europe¹⁸⁸. According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, a vampire is:

a bloodsucking creature, supposedly the restless soul of a heretic, criminal or suicide, that leaves its burial place at night [...] to drink the blood of humans. It must return to the grave or to a coffin filled with its native earth by daybreak. Its victims become vampires after death¹⁸⁹.

Other – elder – sources stresses that vampires have a double-soul or two hearts. After the death of one of them, such a being lives between two worlds nearly eternally: “Living dead, as the living manner of a vampire is often called, points at a border existence, situated between life and death, on an existence, that can last many ages”¹⁹⁰.

Being a vampire means being affected by the worse, darker side of the person, which is, however, closer to the truth nature of a human being. Analogically, it is very difficult to state, if a given person is ruled by any negative powers or just mental-ill¹⁹¹. Such an ambiguity “fitted in a way to the Romantic model of sensibility, where all kinds of mental handicaps unveiled other, inaccessible faces of the world”¹⁹².

¹⁸⁷ Janion Maria: “Artysta romantyczny”... p. 223, [Author’s translation].

¹⁸⁸ Comp.: Janion Maria: “Polacy i ich wampiry”... p. 32–41 and Janion Maria: *Wampir – Biografia symboliczna*, Gdańsk 2008, p. 17–27. Janion presents results of research carried on this subject by other scholars. Some of them e.g. Alexander Brückner looked for the etymology of the word ‘vampire’ in Slavic languages. Also *Encyclopaedia Britannica* points out the Slavic origin of this legend (“Vampire”, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, London 1985, Vol. 12: *Trudean–Żywiec*, p. 253).

¹⁸⁹ ‘Vampire’, *Britannica*... p. 253. In Polish two terms are used to describe the same phenomenon: ‘*upiór*’, which appears often by Mickiewicz, e.g. in regard to Gustav and Conrad, and ‘*wampir*’. The former one is defined as follows: “according to folk believes the ghost of a dead person, paying dearly for his sins, haunts the living and scared with his appearance, and sometimes he drinks their blood” (“*Upiór*”, *Słownik Języka Polskiego PWN*, Warszawa 2007, Vol. 5, p. 476 [Author’s translation]), while the latter: “a terrifying being, who gets up from his grave at midnight in order to drink blood of humans” (“*Wampir*”, *Słownik Języka Polskiego PWN*, Vol. 5, Warszawa 2007, p. 523 [Author’s translation]).

¹⁹⁰ Janion Maria: *Wampir – Biografia symboliczna*... p. 32, [Author’s translation].

¹⁹¹ Biliński Krzysztof: ‘*To jest chwila Samsona*’ ... p. 23.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*: p. 23, [Author’s translation].

Moreover, in the context of this thesis Janion's notice is important:

The negative soul or the negative heart [...] gains the upper hand in a vampire; in this way a destructive drive develops and fulfils itself in this being. [...] A vampire is a kind of our double [...] embodies the evil, limited, inner part of our soul – this 'evil' lurking in everyone¹⁹³.

Not only each person may turn into a vampire, but furthermore, this inner state is inborn and thus it should not be confused with being possessed by any demonic powers¹⁹⁴.

Generally, two kinds of vampirism may be distinguished: a physical and mental¹⁹⁵. The former one can be annihilated with a peg or by chopping a vampire's body, while the latter one – infecting with the wish of revenge – needs exorcisms, which the priest conducts on Conrad before the poet will be transported to Siberia. As Krzysztof Biliński argues also the vampire's soul has to be exterminated, otherwise it is immortal¹⁹⁶.

3.3.1. Vampiric Features of a (National) Poet

Referring to physical characteristics of the poet in *Forefathers* (Part III), there is a clear similarity between him and a vampire. Conrad is pale, but fire flames in his eyes. During the gathering on the Christmas Eve, he sits deep in his thoughts. Admittedly, he listens to stories told by other prisoners, but he does not take part keenly in the discussion. First, at midnight he starts being more active and composing poetry.

Moreover, his ontological status is confusing – whether he is alive or already dead. In the prologue to Part III Gustav, the unhappy lover from Part IV, dies on the *Forefathers'*

¹⁹³ Janion Maria: "Polacy i ich wampirzy" ... p. 43, [Author's translation].

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Biliński Krzysztof: 'To jest chwila Samsona' ... p. 21.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.:

Eve and Conrad, full of patriotic emotions, is born¹⁹⁷. This event remains an unsolved mystery – next one in context of the whole drama cycle¹⁹⁸. In a ‘vampiric’ reading, this metamorphose can be perceived as a death of one of the souls / hearts, since “in my country stays my heart”¹⁹⁹, and a transformation of Gustav-Conrad into a vampire²⁰⁰.

Remembering that vampirism, as understood here, is a ‘natural’, human feature, nothing acquired, the general Romantic concept of the poetic talent shall be mentioned. Without inborn ability one cannot learn composing poetry. Conrad tells about himself:

*I am creator born! I bore them—
My power spring from that same shrine
Whence Thou, God, drewest Thine*²⁰¹.

Consequently, poetry (or better to say the creative ability to compose poetry) – exactly as a vampiric nature – comes directly from Conrad’s soul. It is a gift, which makes him God alike. “Conrad and the source of his pride lie in his consciousness of being a great poet and having at his disposal an extraordinary, spiritual power [...] as an artist he has a creative power, which equalises him with the God-creator”²⁰². He is confident in his arguments, believes to know what motherland needs and thus he is not scared of God. Moreover, as Zofia Stefanowska notices: „A poetic genius is the most sacred

¹⁹⁷ Mickiewicz Adam: “Part III”... p. 135. *D.O.M. / Gustavus / Obiit M.D.CCC.XXIII / Calendis Novembris / Hic natus est / Conradus / M.D.CCC.XXIII / Calendris Novembris* (Polish text: p. 133). Krukowska stresses that Gustav choosing the name Conrad, that is the name of a man of act, decided to accept all consequences resulting from it and the whole tragedy of Wallenrod. Comp.: Krukowska Halina: *Noc romantyczna*... p. 193.

¹⁹⁸ Interestingly, Gustav also lived between life and death – the priest perceives him as a mad, young man, while children believe that he is a spectre [*upiór*]. About these doubts, see e.g.: Witkowska Alina: “Adam Mickiewicz”... p. 253.

¹⁹⁹ Mickiewicz Adam: “Part III”... p. 169. Polish text: *w ojczyźnie serce me zostało* (p. 161).

²⁰⁰ Janion Maria: “Polacy i ich wampiry”... p. 44.

²⁰¹ Mickiewicz Adam: “Part III”... p. 170. The Polish text: *Jam się twórcą urodził: / Stamtąd przyszły moje siły / Skąd do Ciebie przyszły Twoje* (p. 162). In regard to this fragment Sokołowski points at the reflexive pronoun in the Polish text ‘się’, literally it could mean both ‘I was born’ or ‘I born myself’, and this latter is according to Sokołowski a reason, why Conrad perceives himself as equal to God. I do not support this opinion in my thesis although I strongly combine Conrad’s inborn, poetic abilities with God’s creative nature. Comp.: Sokołowski Mikołaj: *Nikt tylko Mickiewicz*, Gdańsk 2008, p. 165.

²⁰² Witkowska Alina: “Adam Mickiewicz”... p. 285, [Author’s translation].

embodiment of the human genius, so – in this system of values – the best qualification to reign over human souls”²⁰³. Thus Conrad is naturally predestined to lead the nation.

Engaging himself in the fight for independence, he moves to the side of evil²⁰⁴. To some extent, this originates from the vampiric status of the poet as well: “Sucking, chewing, biting, that is, kissing to the blood ensure a vampire with eternal life, while victims are either killed or infected with vampirism”²⁰⁵. Conrad uses poetry as metaphorical teeth that ‘bite’ listeners ‘injecting’ them with hatred for other people – first of all to enemies of the nation. He seems also to believe that his poetry gives him immortality, as long as the audience is able to understand the content of his singing.

3.3.2. An Absolute Personification of the Motherland

In order to comprehend, why Conrad thinks so obsessively about independence²⁰⁶, it is necessary to trace his relationship to the motherland. He pretends to understand it better than other people and identifies himself with it:

*I and my country – am one whole!
My name is “Million” – since, for millions, oh, alack!
I love and suffer the rack
I gaze on mu poor land and feel
Like a son whose father is bound on a wheel–*

²⁰³ Stefanowska Zofia: “Wielka – tak, ale dlaczego improwizacja?”... p. 86, [Author’s translation].

²⁰⁴ Krukowska presents a similar understanding highlighting that the desire of revenge does not suit Christian morality. However, Conrad as a representative of an oppressed nation is eager to try each method in order to achieve his goal. Comp.: Krukowska Halina: *Noc romantyczna*... p. 181. It makes Conrad from *Forefathers* (Part III) similar to Wallenrod, who also as a slave chooses an unmoral solution.

²⁰⁵ Janion Maria: *Wampir – Biografia symboliczna*... p. 46, [Author’s translation].

²⁰⁶ Kleiner Juliusz: *Zarys dziejów literatury polskiej*... p. 255. Interestingly, Alt was also unable to think about his own happiness – after getting married he left his wife and country in order to defeat the Teutonic Order.

*I feel for the whole nation's doom
Like a mother for the pains of the fruit of her womb*²⁰⁷.

Conrad wants to liberate his native country without God's help and even against God's will if necessary. All his actions seem to be motivated with this goal. As Witkowska claims: "Conrad is pushed into intense critique and demands made by the consciousness of boundless sufferings of his own nation and a wish to get even with those wrongs"²⁰⁸. As personification of the country, he expresses feelings of loneliness, obligation and sorrow. He does it unprompted in the name of the whole nation.

Because the poet considers God to be responsible for the misfortune of his country, he challenges him to a duel. His poetry should either force God to act or push him to surrender his powers to Conrad, who will use them in a better way, as he himself believes. In this undertaking, he is, however, a usurper²⁰⁹.

Confronted with God's indifference Conrad goes mad. During singing he seems not to control himself. Improvising costs him so much energy that he faints without ending the iconoclastic song. The loss of consciousness saves him from eternal damnation, as he does not manage to insult God comparing him with the Tsar – this blasphemy is voiced by an evil spirit. Moreover, several other characters in the drama put in a good word for

²⁰⁷ Mickiewicz Adam: "Part III"... p. 174–175. Polish text: *Ja i ojczyzn to jedno. / Nazywam się Milijon – bo za miljon / Koacham i cierpię katusze / Patrzę na ojczyznę biedną, / Jak syn na ojca wplecionego w koło; / Czuję całego cierpienia narodu, / Jak matka czuje w łonie bole swego płodu* (p. 166).

²⁰⁸ Witkowska Alina: "Adam Mickiewicz"... p. 285, [Author's translation].

²⁰⁹ Biliński and Szymanis represent similar opinion. Comp.: Biliński Krzysztof: *'To jest chwila Samsona'* ... p. 26 and Szymanis Eligiusz: "Warum ist die Dresdener 'Ahenfeier'" ... p. 88. Siwiec notices that it is combined with Romantic concept of a poet: "The Romantic extreme individualism, which writers wanted to defend in this period for any price, must confront with a priest's mission, the mission of the leader of the nation, elevating the poet, but also addicting him" (Siwiec Magdalena: *"Romantyczne koncepcje poezji"* ... p. 16 [Author's translation]).

Conrad justifying his behaviour with an enormous love for the motherland²¹⁰. Nevertheless, Mickiewicz does not betray, what exactly happens with Conrad later.

3.3.3. The Poet as a Tool of Collective Memory

The oneness of the poet and the motherland is interesting in the context of collective memory. Constituting unity with the motherland, Conrad feels being rather connected to the people – to a group of millions of people, who suffer tsarist oppressions – than to the territory. This was in turn a characteristic of Wallenrod's affiliation to the motherland²¹¹. Witkowska even notices that “This unusual ability to impersonate the fate of the community makes Conrad to someone Christ-alike, and similarly he wants to act a part of a saviour in regard to his own nation”²¹².

Analogically, the term ‘motherland’ seems to refer to a community of people, united by language, culture, tradition or memory. Thus, the poet symbolises all those elements of (national) identity, while his poetic gift obligates him to spreading them. In this way, he serves the nation and that is why, an exile means for him a mental imprisonment, much worse than an ordinary arrest:

*The scoundrels take the fetters from our hands,
And feet, to bind our souls in hersher bands!
I shall be exiled, among distant dangers,
To wander in a foreign crowd, mid stangers.
I am a singer – none will understand
Aught of my song, except its formless, bland
Rhythm and harmony
[...]*

²¹⁰ Comp: “He loved his nation, loved many, was not wary!” (Mickiewicz Adam: “Part III”... p. 197). Polish text: *On kochał naród, on kochał wiele, on kochał wielu* (p. 183). Conrad resembles Prometheus and Faust in this respect, whose actions were also motivated with their enormous love for humans.

²¹¹ Comp.: p. 38 in this thesis.

²¹² Witkowska Alina: “Adam Mickiewicz”... p. 285 [Author's translation]. Job and Samson are other Christian incarnations of Conrad. More about it: Sokołowski Mikołaj: *Nikt tylko Mickiewicz...* p.125–149; Biliński Krzysztof: *To jest chwila Samsona*

*Though I'm alive,
For my country I'm as dead*²¹³.

Conrad wants to perform his poetry for his fellow countrymen, in this manner fulfilling his duties towards the motherland. That makes him similar to a 'vampire' selecting its victims from family members or friends. As Aleksander Gieysztor notices: "[Vampires] harass their own family and relatives, hold intercourse with the alive, with their own wives"²¹⁴. Therefore, living abroad does not make any sense for Conrad. Foreigners will not understand his singing, since listeners without a similar, cultural background are not able to interpret his words correctly either to appreciate them. For them it is only 'formless, bland rhythm and harmony'. The missing recognition and wasted ability do not scare Conrad as much as the fact that he would become dead for his country, meaning that the country would not benefit from his songs. Hence, his possible immorality, guaranteed by poetry, would be endangered.

Surprisingly, Conrad has been imprisoned on the request of angels. They believe that he should think of his fate in solitude like a prophet in the desert²¹⁵. As it can be concluded from the words of a ghost, the poet has great power, but is not entirely aware of it:

*O man, if you but knew, how great your power!
A though in the head, a spark in a cloud, oft gleams
Invisible, collecting rain, that teems,
Makes thunderstorms, or brings the fertile shower—
If thou but knewest, Man, no though of thine,
But, like the massing elements in storms,
Satans and angles wait to take their forms—*

²¹³ Mickiewicz Adam: "Part III"... p. 134–135. Polish text: *Łotry zdejmą mi tylko z rąk i nóg kajdany, / Ale wtłoczą na duszę – ja będę wygnany! / Błąkać się w cudzoziemców, w nieprzyjaciół tłumie, / Ja śpiewak, – i niki z mojej pieśni nie zrozumie / Nic – oprócz niekształtnego i marnego dźwięku / [...] / Żywy, zostanę dla mej ojczyzny martwy* (p. 166).

²¹⁴ Gieysztor Aleksander: *Mitologia Słowian*, Warszawa 1986, p. 222, [Author's translation].

²¹⁵ Comp.: "It was in answer to our prayer / God gave thee up, that thou mightest quail / And languish in thy foeman's lair. Loneliness is the mistress of the wise— / Thou, in this lonely goal / Like a prophet in the wilds / To wonder must not fail / Where the great calling lies; / Nor in the cell, elate, / To muse upon the Fate" (Mickiewicz Adam: "Part III"... p. 132). Polish text: *My uprosiliśmy Boga, / By cię oddał w ręce wroga. / Samotność mędrców mistrzyni. / I ty w samotnym więzieniu, / Jako prorok na pustyni, / Dumaj o twym przeznaczeniu* (p. 131).

*According as thou strike in Hell, or Heavenward shine
But like a lofty, wandering cloud, you blaze,
Yourself not knowing whither fall yur rays!
O men! Each of you could, locked up alone,
By faith destroy and stablish many a throne!*²¹⁶

If Conrad, as a creator, would like to initiate an – even dare-devil – undertaking, he has potential to find a group of keen supporters, who would engage themselves in this idea and follow Conrad's words. So the thought of the poet collects 'rain, that teems, makes thunderstorms, or brings the fertile shower'. This duality: 'fertile shower' versus 'thunderstorms' inclines that his leadership can result in something positive as well as in a tragedy – depending on Conrad's own decision.

But it seems that "Conrad [...] did not match up mentally to the gift of prophesying yet"²¹⁷, as Wiktor Weintraub claims. Conrad's dashing offence towards God confirms his immaturity and exuberant pride²¹⁸, which indicates the later failure of Conrad²¹⁹. Additionally, as Biliński notices, "the character is knight-errant, which points unambiguously at the fact, that he is not able to make use of possibilities given to him by these thoughts"²²⁰. This casts some doubts on, who actually stays behind those ideas and empowers Conrad.

²¹⁶ Ibid.: p. 131–136. Polish text: *Człowieku! gdybyś wiedział, jaka twoja władza! / Kiedy myśl w twej głowie, jako iskra w chmurze / Zabłyśnie niewidzialna, obłoki zgromadza, / I tworzy deszcze rodzajny lub gromy i burze; / Gdybyś wiedział, że ledwie jedną myśl rozniecisz, / Już czekają w milczeniu, jak gromu żywiołu, / Tak czekają twej myśli – szatan i anioły: / Czy ty w piekło uderzysz, czy w niebo zaświecisz; / A ty jak obłok górny, ale błędny, palasz, / I sam nie wiesz, gdzie lecisz, sam nie wiesz, co zdasz. / Ludzie! każdy z was mógłby, samotny, więziony, / Myślą i wiarą zwać i podźwigać trony* (p. 133).

²¹⁷ Weintraub Wiktor: "Dziadów część trzecia: manifest profetyzmu", *Poeta i prorok. Rzecz o profetyzmie Mickiewicza*, Warszawa 1982, p. 214, [Author's translation].

²¹⁸ Comp.: "It was agreed that Conrad – delivering the improvisation – provided a proof of the lack of readiness to fulfil the promised mission of being the saviour and redeemer; it stressed also that he committed a sin of pride, which could have brought each leader to a doom" (Sokołowski Mikołaj: *Nikt tylko Mickiewicz...* p. 186, [Author's translation]).

²¹⁹ Biliński Krzysztof: 'To jest chwila Samsona' ... p. 26.

²²⁰ Ibid.: p. 12, [Author's translation]

3.3.4. The Poet Controlled by Poetry

The liberation project seems actually not to be worked out by Conrad himself. It is rather a project of poetry that rules of his mind. Consequently, poetry resembles an outer power, reigning over the poet.

Such a perception is based also on some vampiric features. An artist serves as a medium, whose main objective consists in voicing poetry. Conrad does not control his body. He is motivated to act and abused at the same time by a mysterious, life-giving power. Being at its each disposal, his existence is permeated with poetry, which makes his life meaningful. Conrad does not speak in his own name: “Conrad stop representing himself, since he identifies himself with people, nation and motherland”²²¹.

Analogically, a poet cannot be told apart from his poetic output, since they are unified with each other in a large degree, forming one vampiric organism. Janion points out: “Listening closely to this terrifying song [the ‘vampiric’ song], we will discover the following personifications: I-the song, I-the vampire, I-Conrad. Conrad, identifying himself with the Song, becomes a vampire and accepts this burden”²²².

Since the poetic gift is inborn, Conrad must accept his burden – he was born to be a ‘vampire’. There is no choice and he has to come in terms with this fact. The birth of Conrad means the birth of the song: “Power of live and sacrifice of live were born. Self-consciousness, greatness, which challenges even God to a duel on hearts were born. Conrad was born. An immortal song, which is also an immortal act, was born”²²³. Thanks to the song, Conrad has a chance to achieve something, which will never be forgotten – his singing is a guarantee of it, a proof of his greatness.

²²¹ Ibid.: p. 58, [Author’s translation].

²²² Janion Maria: “Polacy i ich wampir”... p. 44, [Author’s translation].

²²³ Konopnicka Maria: *Mickiewicz. Jego życie i duch*, Kraków 1921, p. 87, [Author’s translation].

Seeing poetry as an outer and higher power, Conrad's struggling with God and himself may be compared with the relation between the ego and super-ego. Patriotic poetry is to be understood here as the super-ego making demands towards the poet and pushing him to singing. That resembles Wallenrod's attitude towards poetry and the motherland.

There is also an element of pressure, executed on Conrad by collective memory. Nietzsche pointed f.i. at the ambivalence of cultural memory. It helps to prevent a community from disappearing, but it is a measure of a brutal discipline as well. The philosopher claimed that it is a wound, which did not heal and hurt all the time: "Only something which never ceases *to cause pain* remains in the memory"²²⁴. Thus, ancient communities practiced e.g. circumcisions, castrations and other physical practices²²⁵.

The main character of *Forefathers* (Part III) seems to rely on memory of his body. He is also marked, having a wound on his forehead, which never will heal. Trybuś claims that the wound functions as "Cain's brand of belonging" and "metaphors of bodily memory"²²⁶. Since Conrad made this wound himself, the brand may be interpreted as his will to belong to the Polish oppressed community and to identify himself with its sufferings. This shall also remember him about his duties towards the motherland.

The poet and poetry, complementing each other, compete also with each other. Being under rule of the song Conrad struggles with himself, since his abilities and possibilities are limited and do not match his duties. Poetry is never finished and never content with Conrad's work – the poet still wants more and more to satisfy poetry. That is why, he demands even to be recognised by God as a Master.

²²⁴ Nietzsche Friedrich: *On the Genealogy of Morals...* [online].

²²⁵ Assmann Jan: "Erinnern, um dazugehören"... p. 55.

²²⁶ Trybuś Krzysztof: *Pamięć romantyzmu...* p. 60.

There is “a tragic relation between inspiration powers and their outer expression, between the power of the poet’s soul and the supplied matter, between the power of the song and the tool of the song”²²⁷ as Maria Konopnicka puts it. Conrad is aware of that he is cannot realise his planes due to limitations independent of him. Experiencing an inner conflict, he expresses dissatisfaction with the product of his inspiration and tools given him in order to voice poetry in *Great Improvisation*:

*His tongue belies his voice, nor voice his thoughts can
reach:
Thought flies keen from the soul, ere it breaks itself on
speech*²²⁸.

The poet blames his voice and tongue for their inability to imitate the perfection of thoughts. Reciting poetry, which is in his soul, they spoil it. Thus, although he has a clear idea of his work, he cannot convert it into a proper song.

3.3.5. Subconclusion

Assuming that Conrad – as he himself stated it and as it was shown above – embodies the motherland / nation, it is possible to identify his poetry (particularly the ‘vampiric’ song) with the vampire and collective memory reminding one about one’s obligation to fight. Consequently, he is a ‘vampiric embodiment of the motherland’, whereas the motherland is not seen as a territory, but a group of people unified by certain beliefs and values – in other words – it is a community sharing collective memory.

It is also to be concluded that the motherland is cruel – it cannot stand any competition, since it wants to be the only object of love²²⁹. The same may be stated in regard to

²²⁷ Ibid.: p. 88, [Author’s translation].

²²⁸ Mickiewicz Adam: “Part III”... p. 161. Polish text: *Język kłamie głosowi, a głos myślą kłamie; / Myśl z duszy leci bystro, nim się w słowach złamie* (p. 158).

²²⁹ Janion Maria: “Artysta romantyczny”... p. 223.

collective memory, embodied in poetry and seen here, as a metaphysical motherland for an occupied nation without its own, politically sovereign territory.

In this context, the first verses from the ‘vampiric’ song:

*My song was in the grave, already cold
But blood it smells, and from the ground it spies.
Hungry for blood, like a vampire, it grows bold*²³⁰

may be interpreted as a reference to the third partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The state laid almost in a funeral, which – like the Assmannian basic experience – supported the formation of memory culture. The poet’s singing and memories of freedom cultivated by the (national) community can save the country and contribute to regaining independence in the future. This can be perceived as a hint to the function ‘memory in literature’ evolving almost to ‘memory through literature’, since singing functions as a guarantee of the existence of a nation. Poetry is without any doubts a medium of memories, storing them, transmitting and functioning as a cue.

On the whole, it is, however, impossible to say unambiguously, who has the upper hand in the relation between the poet and his poetry, since in a flush of emotions Conrad loses any influence on his artistic production and on himself. To a large extent, poetry appears to control his thoughts and body making him finally unable to act.

3.4. The Role of the Poet and Poetry

Concerning the role of poetry composed by Conrad in *Forefathers* (Part III), it is not necessary to discuss it separately for each song. The ‘vampiric’ song seems namely to be rather an example and realisation of an idea included both in *Small Improvisation*

²³⁰ Mickiewicz Adam: “Part III”... p. 161. Polish text: *Pieśń ma była już w grobie, już chłodna – / Krew poczyła – spod ziemi wygląda – / I jak upiór powstaje krwi głodna* (p. 155).

and *Great Improvisation*, which are more ‘theoretical’ in terms of self-presenting the poet and his ‘professional’ goals.

All functions of poetry mix with each other. Biliński distinguishes three issues stressed by the ‘vampiric’ symbolism in *Forefathers* (Part III): “a necessity to avenge sufferings, pushing the follow countrymen to rebellion and the character of the tsarist system itself, which has to be stamped out entirely”²³¹. Similarly, I describe three main goals of Romantic poetry presented in *Forefathers* (Part III). They are: (1) poetry leading people to fight; (2) poetry that prevents forgetting and demands vengeance on enemies and (3) poetry promising a better future.

3.4.1. Poetry Leading the Nation to Fight

Interestingly, although the idea of a poet as a ‘lawgiver of humanity’ was formulated in England by the Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley²³², it did not have such impact in Great Britain as in Poland, which Czesław Miłosz, the Polish 20th century’s poet and scholar, connects with a strong presence of the Napoleonic myth of a ‘providential man’: “As a consequence of national misfortunes, the reading public in Poland gave literal acceptance to a similar claim on the part of their own poets. The poet is hailed as a charismatic leader, the incarnation of the collective strives of the peoples”²³³.

²³¹ Biliński Krzysztof: ‘*To jest chwila Samsona*’ ... p. 21, [Author’s translation].

²³² Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), who belonged to the most important Romantic poets in England, claimed that poetry shapes social imagination, while ‘poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world’. Comp.: Ferguson Frances: “Representation restructured”, *The Cambridge History of English Romantic Literature*, ed. James Chandler, Cambridge 2009, p. 600 and more: Behrendt Stephan C.: “Introduction: History, Mythmaking, and the Romantic Artist”, *History and Myth. Essays on English Romantic Literature*, Detroit 1990, p. 13–32.

²³³ Miłosz Czesław: *The History of Polish Literature*... p. 200.

Combining that with vampiric features of Conrad, it is significant that “Spectres live on human blood and body, and human soul”²³⁴. In *Great Improvisation* the poet embodying (or at least identifying himself with) the motherland postulates the right to the reign of souls: “Give rule of souls!”²³⁵ demands Conrad talking to God.

Having human souls at his disposal, he may rule over the nation, stir up emotions in people and send them to a bloody battle. In a metaphoric sense, patriotic poetry calling to fight is evaluated according to the number of members of a nation willing to suffer and spill blood. The more prosperous poetry is, the more they hate their enemies.

Thus, Conrad pretends not only to be an artist, but also a leader of the nation. Since he believes to have all necessary abilities, he wants the other members of his community to follow his words. In this sense, he resembles the ancient Greek poet Tyrtaeus, who encouraged – with his patriotic elegies – Sparta’s citizens to the fight, underlining duties towards their forefathers and postulating that one’s origin did not guarantee one automatically bravery, which is rather a result of one’s deeds for the motherland²³⁶.

Simultaneously, it has to be stressed that in his demands, Conrad expresses his wish to be an absolute ruler. He loves the motherland, the nation and the people, but this affection has “characteristics of love of a tyrant, who desires to bend the other to the dictatorship of his heart”²³⁷. The poet does not intend to ask other people about their feelings and opinions – he is sure that he is doing right all the time, and does not need to challenge his position. Therefore, freedom of individuals seems to be endangered. They

²³⁴ Gieysztor Aleksander: “Dusze zmarłych i zmory”... p. 222, [Author’s translation].

²³⁵ Mickiewicz Adam: “Part III”... p. 162. Polish text: *Daj mi rząd dusz!* (p. 163).

²³⁶ Analysing *Konrad Wallenrod* Witkowska argues that it is even possible to talk about “a kind of an omnipotent rule of poetry, especially Tyrtean poetry, of poetry of a heroic duty, usurping the right to the ‘rule of souls’” (Witkowska Alina: “Adam Mickiewicz”... p. 262, [Author’s translation]).

²³⁷ Witkowska Alina: “Adam Mickiewicz”... p. 285 [Author’s translation].

are supposed to focus only on one issue, pointed at by the poet, which is a very instrumental behaviour of Conrad.

Consequently, from the point of view of single members of this community, the mnemonic function of literature as medium – being a cue – is rather brutal and authoritarian – exactly as the motherland was²³⁸. The poet wants to impose his own will²³⁹, and people should subordinate themselves to it, forgetting about their own plans.

3.4.2. Poetry Fanning the Lust for the Revenge

Conrad's 'vampiric' song, it is clearly a vengeance song, swearing a revenge and a bloody defeat of enemies. It reminds listeners of duties and a necessity to fight. While other prisoners talk about sufferings resulted from the tsarist nationalisation policy and exchange their information about their fellows, Conrad, who becomes "a vampire of the patriotic revenge"²⁴⁰, threatens the enemies with a vengeance and challenge them:

*So vengeance, vengeance on the foe,
With God – or sans God if it need be so!*²⁴¹

Although it is not stated precisely, which songs have such an influence on people, Conrad explains the way, how poetry should act and affect listeners. The message encoded in poetry 'bites' as a vampire, converting its 'victims' into steadfast fighters, who will pay the enemies back for all sufferings of their countrymen:

*My song says: Now an evening stroll I'll take.
First, I must bite my brothers, fellow Poles,
In someone's soul my claws I now must slake.
A ghost like me must drink the blood of souls*²⁴².

²³⁸ Comp.: p. 66 and 72 in this thesis.

²³⁹ However, as Krukowska argues, Conrad is very convincing in his claims, so that readers sympathises with him and accepts his plan. Krukowska Halina: *Noc romantyczna...* p. 236.

²⁴⁰ Janion Maria: "Polacy i ich wampirzy"... p. 46, [Author's translation].

²⁴¹ Mickiewicz Adam: "Part III"... p. 162. Polish text: *Tak! zemsta, zemsta, zemsta na wroga, / Z Bogiem i choćby mimo Boga!* (p. 155).

After hearing the song, listeners are unable to think about anything else but the revenge, which turns to be fetish alike²⁴³. As poetry reigns over their memories, plans and acts, struggling for liberation of the motherland is the main goal in their lives. They follow the poet blindly and continue his work 'biting' other people. In this way, the poet becomes the creator of the liberation movement leading the nation to a better future.

Victims of poetry, who themselves evolved into 'vampires', do not take into account the fact that through struggling they condemn themselves to death. Their new passion devastates and exhausts them at the same time. Also Conrad is exhausted by his performance. In the act of singing, he gives his energy to listeners. According to his co-prisoner Frejend he resembles of a bottle:

[...] I
Love you : you too are like a flask of wine,
Pouring out fire and song and feelings fine—
We drink you up, while you yourself run dry²⁴⁴.

The patriotic excitement reaches its climax at the end of *Great Improvisation*, when Conrad gives away all his life energy and faints²⁴⁵.

Conrad's songs are so 'vampiric' and full of hatred that they affect all people independently from their attitude towards the resistant – also the Poles, who co-operate with oppressors – as Krukowska sees it²⁴⁶. The problem is that 'vampiric' songs do not

²⁴² Ibid.: p. 162. Polish text: *I Pieśń mówi: ja pójdę wieczorem, / Naprzód braci rodaków gryźć muszę, / Komu tylko zapuszczę kły w duszę, / Ten jak ja musi zostać upiorem* (p. 155).

²⁴³ According to Charles de Brosses fetish was the most primitive kind of cult, which celebrated a material thing or an animal. As Karl Marx notices the value of this thing was attributed to it by the community and not objectively recognised. Freud claims in turn that fetish causes ambivalent emotions – sensitiveness and hate. Comp.: Mikurda Jakub: "Fetysz", *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, ed. Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska and Robert Traba, Warszawa 2014, p. 127–128.

²⁴⁴ Mickiewicz Adam: "Part III"... p. 146. Polish text: *Kocham cię, boś podobny także do butelki / Rozlewasz pieśń, uczuciem, zapaleń oddychasz, / Pijem, czuję, a ciebie ubywa – usychasz* (p. 143).

²⁴⁵ Such a behaviour may be also linked to hamletism and not being capable of fulfilling one's obligations.

²⁴⁶ Krukowska Halina: *Noc romantyczna...* p. 203. It is an especially interesting idea, if one takes into account reasons for the defeat of the November Uprising. Higher officers did not want to be involved in the patriotic action and refused taking control over the resistant movement.

change them into patriots, while collaborators as ‘vampires’ may endanger the whole independent movement, since vampirism will give them equal power as the patriots. Therefore, aiming at encouraging possibly many people to the fight for the collective cause, an additional measure must be applied – patriotic ‘vampires’, looking for their supporters, must simultaneously eliminate their ‘vampiric’ opponents:

And then I'll drink the foeman's blood in pails!

*I'll cut his body pen with an axe,
I'll fix his hands down and his legs with nails,
Lest he should rise and claim a vampire's tax²⁴⁷.*

The opponents of the independent movement might be seen as ‘vampires to be eliminated’. Moreover, “horribleness of this vindictiveness consists in it, that it is not enough for it to defeat the enemy. Neither the death of the enemy is enough. It wants to avenge itself also after his death on his body and soul”²⁴⁸. This shall prevent the resurrection of those ‘enemy-vampires’²⁴⁹ and tip the balance in the patriots’ favour.

Interestingly, it can be concluded from Conrad’s song, that the future patriots must be cruel– in this respect they resemble poetry and the motherland. They have no choice. Otherwise, as Janion notices, the resistance will be nipped already in the bud:

It is necessary to bite, drink up the blood, kill the enemy, but also to remember about the prevention – those bites cannot change an enemy into a vampire, since in such a situation – in the fight between vampires – their chances are on a par, which may be dangerous, while the aim is to achieve an absolute superiority over the enemy²⁵⁰.

²⁴⁷ Mickiewicz Adam: “Part III”... p. 162. Polish text: *Potem pójdziem, krwe wroga wypijem, / Ciało jego rozrąbiem toporem: / Ręce, nogi gwoździami przybijem, / By nie powstał i nie był upiorem* (p. 155).

²⁴⁸ Weintraub Wiktor: “*Dziadów* część trzecia”... p. 213.

²⁴⁹ Weintraub proposes an exciting interpretation of driving nails into hands and legs: “We deal here namely with an image cluster, which suggests at the same time also crucifixion [...] Savouring himself with a thought about crucifixion of the ‘butcher’, Conrad does not only trample Christianity in himself. Moreover, he annihilates the redeemer’s role of the nation” (Ibid.: p. 213, [Author’s translation]).

²⁵⁰ Janion Maria: “Polacy i ich wampiryzm”... p. 47, [Author’s translation].

Although problematic, this wide influence of poetry does not have to be weakness of (national) poetry. It is true that it does not express the soul of a (national) group to the same extent e.g. like folklore. However, it proves the poet's greatness in terms of his artistic abilities. His poetry is broadly admired (that is: effective). Nevertheless, as it has been shown above, Conrad is not interested in being recognised internationally. His own fame does not matter for him – his goal is the liberation of his native country. Hence, he does not care of listeners and is content singing alone on his own:

Song, thou dost not need earthly eyes nor ears!

*In my soul's caverns flow,
Or her heights shine and glow²⁵¹.*

3.4.3. The Poet as a Prophet

Since the main character of *Forefathers* (Part III) is a Romantic poet, an inspired genius, he does not need to reuse old songs. His works are not based on tradition, rather on his own inspiration. Neither does he follow well-known patterns. Collective memory embodied in poetry is thus not a canon, the storage of texts and knowledge important for the community, but a duty, a demand to fight in honour of the forefathers. Not patterns of old myths are transmitted throughout the generations, but their moral.

The 'native songs' depicted in *Konrad Wallenrod* could be reproduced by anyone and just repeating them guaranteed the survival of the nation. In *Forefathers* (Part III) the necessity of remembering is not challenged – forgetting means the end of a community. However, "the role of the eyewitness becomes more common here. The memory guard does not have to be a bard, a *wajdelota* or a chosen man, but simply everyone, an

²⁵¹ Mickiewicz Adam: "Part III"... p. 166. Polish text: *Wam, pieśni, ludzkie oczy, uszy niepotrzebne; – / Płyńcie w duszy mej wnętrzościach, / Świećcie na jej wysokościach* (p. 158).

ordinary passer-by, may say ‘I myself say it’²⁵². It confirms the scene in the prison, in which almost every prisoner is able to tell about some horrifying events and give testimonies of sufferings of ‘national heroes’.

As mentioned before *Forefathers* (Part III) present the whole generation of Poles, meaning not only the Polish people in one age, but the Poles being affected by the same historic experience²⁵³, who tend to have a common memory of the partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and of the resistance. Mickiewicz depicts them in the scene in the prison at the beginning of the drama, when he allows characters speak about their repressed countrymen. The partition and repressions (seen as constitutive events) are on the daily occurrence. Stories about suffering and cruelty of occupants are still alive and circulate among the community. They belong to the communicative memory of the recent past and are shared by people belonging to the same generation²⁵⁴.

Thus, it is a generational memory, determined the collective identity of the generation experiencing the decline of the state. The situation of the arrested additionally stressed this Assmannian basic experience of a more individual level: “It is difficult to imagine (besides the death) a more radical experience of a break between today and yesterday, as a concrete fact of being imprisoned, of a sudden loss of freedom”²⁵⁵.

²⁵² Witkowska Alina: “Adam Mickiewicz”... p. 281, [Author’s translation].

²⁵³ It is a cultural definition of ‘generation’. Comp.: Kudela-Świątek Wiktoria, Saryusz-Wolska Magdalena: “Pokolenie”, *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, ed. Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska and Robert Traba, Warszawa 2014, p. 372–377. Especially productive in terms of forming new generations are traumatic events like the partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, November Uprising and repressions that followed it.

²⁵⁴ Assmann Jan: *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*... This kind of memory comes into being by primary interactions with other people and goes by along with its bearers, because there is no special, universal coding for it. Its content consists of historical experiences within one’s own biography. The nature of this kind memory is, thus, informal, but with time it may turn towards cultural memory – an institutionalised form of memory. Institutionalisation may happen by commemorations, history teaching or literature,

²⁵⁵ Trybuś Krzysztof: *Pamięć romantyzmu*... p. 31–32.

The reports and testimonies given by prisoners in the Christmas Eve constitute collected memory, using Olick's terminology. Prisoners have the same frames of references and their individual experiences respectively eye-witnessed observations passed to a general idea of sufferings of the nation and messianism. Although they were not institutionalised yet, they followed similar patterns.

In such circumstances, where everyone may tell something about the crucial event, Romantic poets have to offer something more to his listeners. Focusing on the collective cause, initiating actions, presenting ideas for the future and leading the nation to the fight seem to be their new role. The poets become prophets-alike – 'priests of patriotic religion'²⁵⁶. Conrad shows aspiration to become a national *wieszcz*. *Nowa encyklopedia powszechna PWN* [*New General Encyclopaedia PWN*] explains this term as follows:

Wieszcz – an inspired poet, a poet-prophet; the term of an ancient origin [Latin: *poeta vates* that is 'a poet to whom the gods granted the ability to foresee the future'], used in Poland since the 14th century as a synonym for an 'eulogist', gained a special meaning in the Romanticism (in particular, with regard to the creative output of A. Mickiewicz), linked with the concept of the poet as a spiritual leader of the nation; prophetic abilities became prominent especially among other through their connections with folk traditions [...]. The term, consolidated by the critics and by numerous Romantic scholars (e.g. J. Kleiner), played an important part in the Polish literary consciousness through marking out the way of understanding of duties of artists towards the nation struggling for independence since the first half of the 20th century²⁵⁷.

Conrad is a genius and a prophet, who foresees the future²⁵⁸. He has a plan how to restore independence. Since he is a poet, he is also supposed to have power to achieve this goal. Thus, he could in his own opinion lead the nation, reign over the people, and

²⁵⁶ Comp.: Janion Maria: "Artysta romantyczny"... p. 219.

²⁵⁷ "Wieszcz", *Nowa encyklopedia powszechna*, Vol. 6, S-Z, Warszawa 1996, p. 770–771, [Author's translation].

²⁵⁸ Comp.: the statement made by the character called Frejand: "Conrad, solemn lord of mournful rhymes, / Who tells the future like a gipsy knave" (Mickiewicz Adam: "Part III"... p. 146). Polish text: *ponurego poetę Konrada / Który nam o przyszłości, jak Cygan powiada* (p. 142).

“as a great, inspired poet he considers himself to be a prophet”²⁵⁹. Moreover, his prophetic ability is inborn exactly as his poetic talent.

However, since Conrad is imprisoned and surrounded by nation-minded men, the implied impact of his singing cannot be compared with Halban’s affecting Wallenrod, as it was presented in the narrative poem.

3.4.4. Subconclusion

Poetry affecting people is desired and believed to be capable to reign over their souls. Consequently, literature as medium of memory is rather a cue, recalling, inspiring to deeds and promising reward for involvement for a common cause.

The poet is still an initiator of actions, but he does not steer the nation from behind the back of a great man predestined by the community or by the bard as Wallenrod was. On the contrary, he perceives himself as such, acts with certain goals and turns to be a frontman of the nation leading it towards independence. In his behaviour, the poet is, nevertheless, authoritarian and tyrannical.

He is aware of his poetic talent and proud of it, but it seems that he is cannot use this great abilities in a proper manner. He perceives himself as a creator and therefore he compares himself with God, overestimating himself. Because of the involvement in the national cause, he is not scared of sin – his love for the motherland explains his madness and seems to steer all Conrad’s actions aiming at the liberation of the motherland.

Moreover, in the situation, when the community is oppressed and the memory of sufferings is kept alive within families, the Romantic poet needs to find a market niche

²⁵⁹ Weintraub Wiktor: “*Dziadów część trzecia*”... p. 214, [Author’s translation].

for himself. He cannot only contribute to the maintenance of collective memory by singing about the glorious past and heroic forefathers. He must captivate his listeners by a promise of a success of their fight and explaining their defeats into metaphysical terms. The poet resembles a prophet in his new role.

Metaphors used by Mickiewicz to describe the impact of poetry on listeners are very cruel in *Forefathers* (Part III) since it functions as a vampire 'infecting' people with a certain ideology and convincing them to value the motherland more than their own lives. At the same time, they may act scrupulously eliminating their opponents.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Collective Memory Embodied in Poetry as Poison

Referring to the category ‘memory in literature’, distinguished by Erll and Nünning, the aim of this thesis was to investigate, how Mickiewicz (or more exactly the implied authors in Mickiewicz’ works) perceived the social, mnemonic role of Romantic poetry and poets in the time of non-existence of an independent (Polish) state. This was achieved through the interdisciplinary analysis of the narrative poem *Konrad Wallenrod* and the third part of the drama cycle *Forefathers*, seen as meta-texts and kinds of poetic manifests. The combination of literature studies, memory studies with among other things nationalism research and psychoanalysis has turned to be fruitful in my phenomenon-based reading of those famous pieces of writing, which belong to the most crucial texts for the Polish Romanticism.

While their most interpretations tend to stress the love for the motherland and the fight for its liberation as the major values, it is also possible to look at literature as a medium of (collective) memory in different ways. There is no doubt that poetry may replace the political autonomy storing and circulating fundamental identity contents as well as acting as a cue for members of a particular memory culture. Both the bard Halban and the poet Conrad tend to propagate a nation-focused thinking and inspire other fellow citizens to engage themselves in the resistance. Using different measures – Halban repeats old songs and relies on tradition, while Conrad improvises himself creating poetry – they both want to assume the ‘rule of souls’. Their singing educates, reminds one of one’s duties and kindles patriotic feelings. Thus, consequently, broadly understood literature safeguards the existence of a (national) community.

However, the postmodern approach, replacing the monolith of a community with a group of individuals and polyphony of their voices, motivates a change of the perspective and a shift of interests towards individuals. This, in turn, casts a new light on collective memory. Olick e.g. distinguishes collected and collective memory. The former one is a set of individual experiences, which members of a group made on their own and thus those experiences may vary and contradict with each other. By contrast, the latter one – collective memory – is institutionalised narrative of the past, borne by the members of the community, but spread ‘top-down’, which means that it has been imposed on people. Also Assmann juxtaposes communicative memory (a living memory, acquired by people as a result of their own experience or communication with relatives, friends etc.), with culture memory (extracted from the past as desired, and consequently cultivated and transmitted by the community as its constitutive narrative).

If differences between personal memories of the members of a group and the official version of events propagated by the authorities and state institutions are too large, contra-narratives of the ‘oppressed’ groups emerge. This was a starting point for my research on Mickiewicz’s conception of poetry that should keep the memory of the politically non-existing (Polish) state alive. After the third partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth the (Polish) narrative of the past as well as of the recent revolt and oppressions of the (Polish) ‘nation’ changed their status and became a contra-narrative to the Russian Empire’s policy aiming at Russification.

Interestingly, the analysis of Mickiewicz’s works allows one to notice another kind of ‘violence’ linked to collective memory – not only this tied to the emergence of contra-narratives. Seeing poetry as an embodiment of collective memory and paraphrasing the statement made by Wallenrod during the feast, collective memory can be in my opinion compared to the ‘poison’, which ‘infects’ people, that is, exerts pressure on them

influencing their decisions. The members of a given memory culture are brought up within a certain discourse, learned to observe certain norms and respect the value system formulated by this community. The problem is not the fact that those members have another memories, but the fact that they are 'forced' to have similar experiences and to follow in their forefathers' footsteps instead of executing their own ideas. This is namely supposed to prove their affiliation to the group and strengthen their feeling of belonging. The patterns of behaviour are to be found among other things in Romantic poetry. Although the pressure is not executed directly, all conscious members of the community keep in mind the hopes, which the community puts on them. Therefore, collective memory may be juxtaposed with the super-ego, which the ego (the member of a memory culture) should satisfy.

As the case of Alf/Wallenrod shows, singing of the bard is able to substitute the personal contacts with the community of the origin and give the character a Lithuanian identity. However, simultaneously, it embitters his life and converts him into a blindly determined patriot, who does not care about his own happiness, valuing more the good of their motherland. Following the words of songs, he looks at reality exclusively from the perspective of the common good, which is not beneficial for him as an individual. When the 'poisonous' influence of singing weakens with the time and Wallenrod's attitude towards the bard changes from the admiration to the hate. The main character blames him for spoiling his life with patriotic zeal, but it is too late to start living in a different way. Although he enjoys his position of the Grand Master and thinks more rationally, his existence seems to him to be empty and wasted, because of the decisions he made in his youth. As an adult, Wallenrod is no more so keen on revenge, but the bard is functioning as a guard of collective memory, reprimands him and pushes to keep

his word. After having finally fulfilled his promise, the Grand Master has no other goal in his life and decides to commit a suicide.

Nevertheless, poetry containing contents of collective memory affects not only its listener(s). Also its addressers – the bard and the Romantic poetic genius – can be seen as abused by powerful and ruthless poetry. Spreading the ‘poison’ within the community the poets turn, namely, to demonic beings, which like vampires ‘bite’ listeners with their songs ‘infecting’ next generations in this manner. To some extent it may be observed in case of Halban, while it is even more visible in *Forefathers* (Part III), where the focus is not laid on an object of poetic actions (listeners), but on the poet himself. In his activity, Conrad, who wants to encourage people to follow his words, is a usurper and does not take into account others’ opinions.

Conclusions drawn from Conrad’s singing show that the poet is ruled by a mysterious, poetic power and does not control his own words or body. The ‘poison’ seeping from poetry seems to have an even greater impact of society than the poet himself has. It motivates actions of the poet, but also exhausts him at the same time. Since it is an inborn gift (or curse), the poet cannot eliminate its influence on himself. Moreover, poetry is independent of his will to a degree. This leads him almost to a doom, when he argues with God and is close to insult him. Exactly as his listeners, he has been converted to a tool of the (national) common cause and is supposed to voice collective memory. However, he seems to be too weak to manage this task. Steadily he experiences an inner conflict between his duties and limited abilities.

The ‘vampiric’ metaphoric and bloody images used by Mickiewicz prove that there is a dark side of collective memory embodied in poetry. Surprisingly, poetry, motherland as well as collective memory are depicted in a cruel and terrifying way. There is a clear

element of violence and pressure put on individuals by the poet and on the poet by poetry, which is not as unusually remembering that collective memory (appearing here in form of poetry) was associated – e.g. by Nietzsche and Freud – with an imposed element of belonging to a group. Individuals do not have, however, any choice and must subordinate themselves to the community.

Here, it is important to stress once more that this negative impact of literature functioning as a medium of memory, results to a large extent from the postmodern perspective focusing on individuals instead of on the groups. Although it seems to be consistent with the assumed intention of the main character in *Konrad Wallenrod*, looking at this kind of ‘poisonous’ poetry from the point of view of an (oppressed) community, collective memory embodied in poetry may be described in positive terms. It strengthens the memory culture endangered by new, unfavourable political circumstances and initiates a liberation movement.

Although Polish nationalism can be characterised as a political one as far as the early 19th century is concerned, the role of culture and literature was strongly emphasised there. Thus, it can be concluded that the ‘poisoning’ way of composing and ‘vampiric’ way of reading were not an accidental result of further developments, but a planned action intended by Romantic authors. This is to agree with Janion, who pointed out at the intention of poets to influence their readers through their own ‘vampiric’ writings. Literature was believed to have the ability to replace educational institutions in the situation, when the sovereign state did not exist.

Nevertheless, pointing out at a poisonous aspect of collective memory, as depicted in the widely-read works by the Polish national bard, can question the idea of providing canonic interpretations and open new discussions about patriotism in Poland, where

issues like the love for the motherland still arouses emotions and are highly politicised. Moreover, it can result in a reflection on how to teach literature at schools and how to read the Romantic poetry today.

4.2. Further Research

As it has been shown in the analysis of *Konrad Wallenrod* and *Forefathers* (Part III) the way of presenting the social abilities of a poet and the influence that Romantic poetry may have on listeners evolved in Mickiewicz's works. While *Konrad Wallenrod* seems to be the peak of belief in an affecting power of literature to form the (national) imagination of a group, *Forefathers* (Part III) stresses the poet's extraordinary proud and inability to execute his plans (or plans of poetry that reigns over the poet). Here, it shall be pointed out again that the character of Conrad is the last of the great individuals composing poetry in Mickiewicz's oeuvre.

In this context, it would be worth to discuss other works by Mickiewicz as well, first of all those published before *Konrad Wallenrod*, in order to get an even fuller overview of relationships between poetry and collective memory, and observe how the idea of social, commemorative functions of poetry had been worked out. I mean in the first line other parts of the drama cycle *Forefathers* and another historic poem *Grażyna* [1822].

The title of the former one itself – 'Forefathers' – refers to (collective) memory and commemoration of dead ancestors. Though poetry (either poet) does not appear in Part II [1820/1821], there is another character of a shaman – *Guślarz* – who can be seen as a pre-model of a bard, leading rituals performed on the Forefathers' Eve and having the 'rule of souls'. By contrast, in Part IV [1821/1822], the unhappy lover Gustav, who later

evolves to Conrad, claims that “murderous book”²⁶⁰ [*książki zbójeckie*]– among others Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (*Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*; 1774) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Julie, or the New Heloise* (*Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse*; 1761) – have destroyed his life giving him a false image of love and women. In turn, *Grażyna* expresses an imperative to value the motherland and common good most. The character of Rymwid keeps the memory of the past and forefathers’ deeds alive and resembles Halban from *Konrad Wallenrod*, but he is not a bard.

An analysis of those texts would potentially give a boarder picture of interrelations between (collective) memory and poetry, sketched in this thesis, as well as allows to map different sources that inspired Mickiewicz to create a concept of the mnemonic role of Romantic poets and poetry.

²⁶⁰ Mickiewicz Adam: “Part IV”, *Forefathers*, London 1968, p. 41. (Polish text: Mickiewicz Adam: *Dziady*, Kraków 1949, p. 47). The English translation changes slightly the meaning of the Polish phrase. Literately, it means ‘robbery book’.

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